

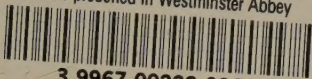
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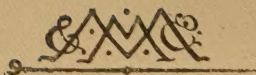


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SERMONS

PREACHED
IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY

R. H. CHARLES, D.LITT., D.D.

CANON OF WESTMINSTER
FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

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PREFACE

THE following Sermons were preached in Westminster Abbey at various times during the past four years. They are not designed to expound any special system of Theology, though, of course, they presuppose one. Their object is mainly practical: yet their appeal is not to some limited province of man's being but to the whole man as one who thinks and wills and feels and is a denizen of two worlds. The Sermons are, for the most part, independent studies, and, this being so, the same thought occasionally recurs and sometimes in the same form.

4 LITTLE CLOISTERS,
WESTMINSTER ABBEY,
September 1917.

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- “But some one will say, How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die ; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain . . . but God giveth it a body. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in

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"And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy ; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while ; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble."—iv. 16, 17 [R.V.]. (III)

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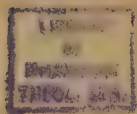
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I

“If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know.”—ST. JOHN vii. 17.¹

THE knowledge here promised to the man who willeth to do God's will is knowledge in the largest sense of the word: it is the apprehension of truth by the entire personality of man in its threefold expression of thought, feeling, and will. None of these can singly be the organ of divine knowledge: all are indispensable, and yet not all in the same degree; for of thought, feeling, and will the chiefest of these is will. We shall now try to determine some of their respective functions in the acquisition of the divine knowledge, which is eternal life.

I. The intellect is the first instrument necessary for the acquisition of such knowledge. But by means of the intellect alone such knowledge cannot be attained. If it were attainable by such means, then religion would become a matter of demonstration and possess the same certainty as science. But by achieving scientific certainty, religion would forfeit its spiritual

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, April 5, 1914.

essence, and banish from its confines all reverence, faith, and hope, every virtue, heroism, and sanctity. In every department of life man would then be a mere creature of prudence, and obedience to the divine voice within us would be replaced by a mechanical conformity to an external scientific law, which none but a madman would think of disobeying.

And yet the desire for a scientific demonstration of the Faith arises from time to time in the breasts of religious men, from their longing to escape the trials and distractions of doubt. But doubt cannot be evaded in the sphere of religion, unless we destroy its very essence by making it a science. Nay, more, so far are transient invasions of doubt from being incompatible with an intelligent faith, that only those who have experienced them in some degree can be said to have faith at all. True faith is a witness to a spiritual order of law, and implies a recognition of the difficulties that beset it in the world of sight. If we would embrace the Faith, we must do so, not indeed without the exercise of the intellect, but without its full satisfaction. In the sphere of faith doubt is a divine discipline, and is designed for the mental and moral enlargement of man, for his enfranchisement from the yoke of the seen and temporal with a view to his fuller citizenship in the kingdom of the unseen and eternal.

But we must be careful here and differentiate such doubt from other varieties only too

familiar, which are in no sense heaven-born, but arise either from moral failings or the diseased activity of a subtle understanding. Doubts which have their source in breaches of the moral law are to be met with everywhere, alike in Christianity and other religions, amongst the most highly civilised and the most barbaric nations in the world. But the doubt that arises from a morbid activity of the intellect is mainly to be met with at the centres of intellectual energy. It is not infrequently found in the self-involved students of mature years, who, voluntarily or involuntarily, have turned their backs on moral responsibilities, and so bereft themselves of the materials of a deep spiritual experience. Moral and spiritual paralysis is a not infrequent concomitant of a brilliant intellectualism.

Under neither of these heads, however, ought we to reckon the early doubts which naturally beset our younger brethren on their entrance into the main currents of the intellectual life. Sooner or later every thoughtful mind must break with the peace of unreflective childhood, and this breach takes effect most naturally where the intellect is roused into an abnormal activity. If at such a crisis the moral and spiritual faculties are allowed to slumber, then nothing short of spiritual disaster can ensue. Is it strange that so many youths part with the creeds of their fathers at such a period, and think that in their superior enlightenment they have outgrown the faith that

commands the allegiance of their elders? With very many, happily, this scepticism is but a passing distemper, from which they recover through spiritual experience and the recognition of the larger truths, which were beyond their grasp in earlier years. Others, alas! never attain to faith and truth in this world, whether it be through their unwillingness to incur the spiritual cost, or through positive moral disqualifications for the reception of truth, or through some inherited incapacity of mind. But the sooner all such victims of sceptical depression recognise that a religion demonstrable to the intellect is an impossibility, the sooner they will learn that the remedy is to be found, not in a more agile intellect, but in a more dutiful and reverent will, and that true religion can be grasped only by the entire personality. The ascendant activity of the intellect, unaccompanied by a deep moral experience, must issue sooner or later in the shipwreck of the entire personality.

II. The next instrument which a man must use in the quest of truth is the feelings. The feelings form the springs of action, the driving power, the dynamic, necessary for the realisation of thought and duty. Their object is to lead a man out into action. Of what avail are feelings of generosity, compassion, repentance, admiration, unless they are forthwith embodied in an actual change of mind or translated into action? And yet this office of the feelings is frequently misconceived, and

men, conscious of high aspirations and a ready sensibility to religious appeal, can with difficulty conceive themselves faithless to divine opportunities and the duties of everyday life. Nevertheless, every right emotion and impulse, every throb of penitence and aspiration, unless they attain their divinely appointed goal and issue in a new and purer devotedness to God and man, are merely so much waste of our spiritual resources, and enfeeble the nature it was their sole purpose to strengthen and inspire. The identification of the religious feelings with religion forms one of the most unhappy chapters in the history of human delusion. "When," writes James, the American psychologist, "a resolve or fine glow of feeling is allowed to evaporate without bearing practical fruit, it is worse than a chance lost: it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility, but never does a concrete manly deed."

The end of all feelings, then, is action, and this is especially true of the religious feelings. But to secure the fulfilment of this end the feelings must ever be subject to a good will, else their tendency is to end in their own indulgence, and finally perish. But, again, at their best the feelings are but fitful in their appearance, and time and duty cannot await

the tardiness of their advent. We cannot remain inactive till some emotion, unsought and unearned, awakes within us and makes the duty of renunciation easy, the task of compassion a delight. Here, as before, we must fall back on the earnest will, and go and do the deed of mercy or reparation, though it be with unresponsive spirit; and fulfil, even when our hearts are coldest, the claims they owned when they were all aglow.

III. The third and chief factor needful for the acquisition of truth is the will, and that a will obedient to the highest known to it—in other words, a good will. The importance of the will is emphasised in the strongest terms in the Scriptures. “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” “whosoever willeth let him take of the water of life freely”; “ye are not willing to come unto Me that ye may have life.” The life or salvation here promised is salvation in the large sense of the word. Such salvation is not only a future, but an actual present blessing. It means the redemption of the whole man from evil; his deliverance from the sins and diseases incident to the passions, intellect, and spirit, and the making of the man sound in his entire personality.

Now let us consider first the influence of a good will on the intellect. This influence is, of course, indirect. By no effort of the will can we add a cubit to our intellectual stature, but by removing the vices of the mind we can contribute immeasurably to its efficiency

and strength in the quest of truth. For only too easily is the mind diverted from this quest by self-interest and the passions of fear and ambition. How hard it is for the natural justice of the understanding to assert itself, "when interest promises to one set of opinions emolument and honour and to their opposite poverty and disgrace." The temptation in such a case—to palter with evidence, to stifle inconvenient doubts, and to make one's professions square with one's interests—cannot but prove insurmountable to characters of imperfect morality, and to this temptation professional men are particularly exposed, whether they be divines or students of medicine or science. Only too soon is the danger of running counter to established traditions brought home to them, and the expediency of establishing a reputation as "safe" men, if they would not sacrifice success in their professional career. It is well, indeed, that there should be "safe" men in every walk of life, but not "safe" in the sense just used. In every profession there must be numbers of men whose strength is to sit still, whose minds cling fast to the old and the familiar, and who look with suspicion on every movement in advance. That there should be such is a safeguard against overhasty progress; but, if there had been only such men from the outset, mankind would never have emerged from the condition of the tiger and the ape. But "safe" men in the censurable sense of

the word are those who, when they might have advanced the cause of moral or social progress, have advanced only their own interests. Such safe men are the curse of the Church and the bane of science. Happy, on the other hand, is the man of pure and resolute will who can turn a deaf ear to the solicitations of passion and interest, and take the path that duty prescribes. He, at all events, who tries to act after this fashion can safely leave his career in higher hands, and look to the same source for that insight and inspiration which are never withheld from the faithful seeker. And who can gauge the powers of such a man, when liberated from the thralldom and distractions of the lower nature and "committed to the Almighty to wield them at His will"?

We have here dwelt on the need of an earnest and resolute will for delivering the mind from its inherited or self-incurred vices, and fitting it for the tasks it was designed to achieve. We have next to point out the need of an earnest will, in order to preserve as living truths the religious knowledge we have inherited or won for ourselves. Now such knowledge has an undoubted tendency to become a substitute for conduct, as the religious feelings tend to become a substitute for religion. Our familiarity with spiritual truths is too apt to be taken, even by ourselves, for spiritual experience, and our ready assent to these truths often blinds us to our practical forgetfulness of them. But, however

much we know, we are after all only what we have done. The highest religious truths cannot really be known till they are lived. Only to the obedient do they become actual beatitudes: only to those that fear Him is the secret of the Lord disclosed: "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Passing now from the consideration of the intellect to that of the feelings, we would emphasise first of all the necessity of keeping the feelings in subjection to the will. We have here come to what is perhaps the most important section of our subject; for, as we pursue it, we shall discover how the action of an earnest will becomes a regenerative force in the life of man, the restorer of his wasted energies and affections, the supreme condition of the scholar's insight, and, highest of all, the agent of the soul's conversion to God.

The affections must be subjected to the sway of the conscientious will if we are to fulfil our Christian duty; for Christianity makes high demands on the affections. But how are we to act if we are without such affections? We cannot supply them by any effort of the will. Such affections as love, hate, admiration, reverence, are involuntary. By no spasm of determination can we make ourselves love an object we do not love, or hate an object we do not hate. But, though the will cannot generate such affections, it can prepare for their birth, it can practise the maieutic art, and in this way our voluntary

actions become the birthpangs of our involuntary affections. To explain. We cannot by an effort of the will produce a right affection. But, if despite its absence we do the duty to which the missing affection should have led, we establish the possibility of its birth or revival in us, and, if with conscientious persistency we perform the same duty as often as it arises, then the possibility becomes an actuality, and the affection is born within us. The act itself, indeed, can never, of course, however often it is repeated, become an affection. But the growth of the affection is made possible by the repeated fulfilments of the duty, because, in such fulfilments, the will constantly checks the impulses that conflict with the duty, and so ultimately destroys them; for evil affections, like weeds, must die if all their growth is checked. But this explanation, it may be rejoined, shows only how the will removes obstructions to the growth of the new affection but does not explain its origin. That is quite true. No action of ours can originate any right affection. We can only remove obstructions to its growth. Ours is not the work of inspiration, but only the dutiful act; we have to work out that which God works in us; for it is God that implants the generous affection and prompts the impulse of mercy; it is God that gives the grace of repentance, the vision of holiness, and the hunger and thirst that can find satisfaction in Him alone, and in none other.

Let us take an illustration. If, when motions of envy arise within us at a rival's success, we refuse on the one hand with strong resolve to give any expression to this evil passion, and on the other pray earnestly to God that our successful rival may have every blessing and every possible enjoyment from the very success which provoked our envy, then we shall find that this venomous passion will die within us, and in its stead there will grow up the joy of disinterested affection, a genuine delight in the prosperity of a former rival.

To the above experiences in the province of the affections we have remarkable analogies in those of the mind and spirit. In the province of thought the revelations of truth are made to the earnest seeker. But such revelations do not come easily and of course. Oftentimes for days or months or years the mind must study and toil terribly, must saturate itself with its subject, must intend itself often and long and seemingly without result, till at last in some unexpected hour the truth dawns suddenly on the seeker, and the chaos of facts are in a moment transformed into a well-ordered cosmos. How barren for the time and sterile appeared the strenuous hours when the mind with restless energy laboured to advance, now in this direction, now in that, but such periods were not fruitless; for in their course the persistent energy of the mind was unconsciously removing the obstructions that stood between it and the insight it craved. Thus here, as in the sphere

of feeling, the mind had to pursue its laborious toil till at last, its task being done, the God-given light was vouchsafed, and order and knowledge were established, where before disorder and ignorance reigned.

But there is a task of still higher achievement for the faithful will. Its aim now is, not the restoration of some single right affection in the sphere of feeling, nor yet the discovery of some truth in the sphere of thought or science, but one that infinitely transcends such aims, and yet is to be achieved on analogous lines. This aim, need I say, is the chief end of man, to meet God face to face, to know Him, to love Him, and to live unto Him for ever. It is true, indeed, that at times God is found of those that sought Him not. But this experience is not general. In the province of the spirit, as in those of the affections and intellect, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh is the gate of access opened. Here, above all, we need the earnest will. And for such a will in God's world there is no such word as fail. The quest may be long, the strife arduous, but sooner or later the goal is reached, the battle won. How soon, how late, in each individual case no man can determine. In one case the faithful seeker may have to pursue the path of duty through a long period of years unblest by the consciousness of that high communion with God, that turns servitude into sonship, and the demands of duty into objects of the affections. In another the seeker may

have only entered on the way of obedience, when in one transcendent moment God makes Himself known, and the soul is at one with the Highest and at peace.

Why this supreme revelation is made in one case at the outset of the pilgrimage and at another withheld till this life's close, or later, even when we know all the earthly conditions, can only in part be determined. And yet we are not left wholly in ignorance on this matter ; for the analogous series of facts in the provinces of the feelings and the intellect suggest that here, as there, obstructions in the soul of the seeker had to be removed before he could receive the salvation he sought. But a further explanation may be found in the different objects of the seekers. For since salvation is differently conceived by different men, surely God's answer to the soul's cry for salvation must vary likewise. To one man salvation means, first and chiefly, deliverance from the fears and penalties that dog the heels of sin ; to another, redemption from sin itself ; to another, the filling of the whole man, spirit, mind, and affections, with the Being of God. Is it strange, then, that one soul should early succeed in its quest, and that another should have to struggle onward through the darkness of years ? Is it strange that the salvation into which some men enter through conversion should have various ethical values, seeing that one man conceives religion as the refuge of his weakness, whilst another reveres it as the

educator of all his strength? Is it strange, therefore, that the character of some men at the crisis of conversion should be almost wholly unformed and need the discipline of babes in Christ, and that the character of others should be mature and ready for His completed will?

But, however great our present attainment, we must still press onward. The task of the faithful will is the creation of Christlike character. But character with any affinity to the divine can only be attained through increasing faithfulness to the ever larger light that dawns upon the soul. Every such manifestation of His will is the Master's summons to His disciple, "Come up higher," and every response to such a summons can only be done at a cost. Duty, then, should it grow more severe, must yet be more dutifully done, the mind's doubts faced, however terrible their challenge, and love's claims honoured, even when they exact the full self-sacrifice. Only by such obedience can we gain the full instruction that God has committed to the faithful life, and so transform our days from a series of self-repetitions into a life of progressive achievement. "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

II

“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.”—ST. JOHN iv. 34.¹

IN these words our Lord proclaims that He has come to fulfil a spiritual task; that that task is the doing of God's will, and that in the doing of this will He finds His spiritual meat and drink. Now so far as His spirit is moulding our characters and lives we too shall have the assurance that we have a spiritual task to fulfil, that that task is some form of God's will, and that in the fulfilment of this task we receive meat and drink from God. Thus our life's work on earth is the task our God has sent us here to fulfil, and as we duly fulfil it, we receive divine food from heaven—such is the teaching of the words before us.

With a view to the fuller appreciation of these divine facts, let us contrast the widely different conceptions in this respect that have prevailed in Christendom.

I. First the Monastic conception of the world which has prevailed from the earliest days down in many places to the present time.

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, April 16, 1916.

According to this view the world is incurably bad, and the chief duty of man is to forsake the world and secure his own salvation in the hermit's cave, in the convent cell or the cloistered quiet of great cities. Human nature is only evil, and so far as the soul is engaged in the pursuits of this life, so far is it lost to things eternal. Even the purest human relations are without divine significance: so far from helping us onward to God, they are only a hindrance and an offence: they are to be renounced. "Marriage," says Pascal, "is a kind of homicide."

These words of Pascal express, though in exaggerated terms, the attitude which certain sections of the Christian Church have adopted on this question. But this attitude is contrary both to Jewish and Christian teaching. In the early ages of the Church it first appeared among the Gnostics and other Christian heretics. Thus Tatian declared that marriage was "corruption and fornication," and Saturninus and Basilides maintained that "marriage and generation were from Satan." This unchristian view of marriage was heathen in origin. It was taught throughout the Roman Empire by the religions of Isis and Mithra, and by Buddhism in the Far East, while analogous developments may be found in the "Virgins of the Sun" in the ancient religion of Peru and in the Aztec priesthood in Mexico.

But to return: however we may condemn the

Monastic conception of life in the present, it did great work in past ages in the Church's conflict with heathenism and the deep-seated demoralisation of society : it was a clarion-call to individual faithfulness amid universal seething corruption : it was an undeniable witness to a spiritual order of motives at work in the world, which could not fail to rouse the perplexed wonder of the devotees of pleasure, state-craft and worldly wisdom : it was a standing testimony to ages dead in trespasses and sins of a life triumphant alike over fleshly lusts and the temptations of the world.

Thus, however incomplete as a doctrine of life, it served the Church's need in the absence of fuller truth, but with the appearance of that fuller truth its rationale and right of existence alike vanished. The consideration of this completer yet still imperfect conception of the Christian life now demands our attention—a conception which, however we may disown it in principle, is, unhappily, the only one which the vast majority of us confess in practice. As contrasted with the complete Christian conception of life, we shall, in default of a better designation, call this the Puritan conception.

II. This conception of life agrees with the Monastic in regarding the world as bad, but differs from it in declaring that it is not necessary to forsake the world : the world, it is true, is full of dangers and opposed to the Christian principle : still the daily tasks of life are indispensable : we must get through them some-

how, with as little contamination as possible. The highest we can expect from our intercourse with the world or even from our conquest of it is to hold fast our present attainments in the spiritual life, but not in the slightest particular to extend their range, to seek, not to lose, in the world the spiritual elevation we have won apart from it: and thus though the main part of our life must be spent in necessary worldly pursuits, yet these can afford us no positive teaching from God, and though we must always be sowing spiritual things unto the world, we can reap therefrom only worldly things; for the world is a place not for getting spiritual force but for expending the spiritual force we have won in the closet, and our Christian life is fed not through our life's occupations but through our worship apart from them.

How general is it for most of us so to conceive of our existence here, and thus when we go forth from communion with our God into the busy ways of life, into the din of its toil and traffic, to feel ourselves in a kind of alien world and to be conscious of no spirit of divine obligation as guiding us in the paths of noble uprightness, and thus how frequently do we adopt usages of society and business, which in our inmost being we must regard as desecration and death. Our religion is thus confined to our works of charity, to our hours of sacred meditation, and to our seasons of public and private devotion, but all the days and weeks and months and years we spend in

the occupation and social duties and pleasures that God has appointed us make no return, render no tribute of spiritual harvest. We go forth unto our labour in the morning hours, we go forth, and instead of moulding the world the world so often moulds us, and at even we return confessing our misused graces, our shameful concessions, our spiritual treasons, the exceeding sinfulness of our sin. Thus we lead a sort of dual existence, and our life of needful toil and social intercourse seems ever to rob us of the still more needful life divine.

It is needless to point out how inadequate and incomplete are these two conceptions of the Christian life that we have thus shortly reviewed. We feel that the main position on which they are based is a pernicious falsehood, *i.e.* that our life's worship and our life's occupations are irrevocably and for ever sundered, and that the latter, while they ever tend to obstruct, can never promote the former. We feel, I repeat, that there is no such irreconcilable dualism in life and have only to examine this position to find that it is contrary to the teaching alike of Reason and Revelation.

This confusion in life is brought about by our application of materialistic ideas to spiritual facts: we come to the conception of the Christian life with ideas of material sacredness and holiness, ideas *i.e.* that holiness and sacredness belong to certain actions, and occupations or places in themselves, whereas, if we but reflect, we must perceive that holiness is a

spiritual thing, and can only belong to spiritual beings or persons, and that it cannot attach to a place unless indirectly as associated with a spiritual being: in themselves all places are indifferent, in themselves all lawful occupations are likewise indifferent, and the occupation of a Christian teacher is not necessarily a whit more spiritual in kind than that of a blacksmith, unless the temper in which it is fulfilled is so. It is thus the spirit in which our work is done, whatever that lawful work may be, which determines its character as divine or worldly, as sacred or profane. All rightful occupations are in God's purpose alike sacred, and do not differ from each other in *kind* but only in *degree* of sacredness, accordingly as one is more adapted than another to be a channel of divine grace and enlightenment. Every occupation, moreover, has its own particular teaching to impart, its own particular share to take in the formation of character. And such is the solidarity of the Christian Brotherhood—the great Body of which all faithful men are members—that each faithful life is a contribution to the life of the whole community, and all true character, formed through the faithful discharge of life's allotted task, promotes the spiritual well-being of humanity at large. But, and this we cannot observe too carefully, in order that our life's occupation should enrich us with the divine revelation that it alone can bestow, we must address ourselves thereto in a spirit that transcends it, a spirit that is over and above it; it

must be far above the level of the highest social or personal relationships, infinitely above patriotism, far above the dearest human ties: "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his father and mother, his wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." An English poet puts this truth in the familiar words:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

Thus the love of country, parents, or children can only work towards the highest well-being of its objects if it is first of all rooted in God. If undertaken in any lower mood, our life's calling will drag us down, and stripping us of every glory of our spiritual freedom, make us mere creatures of the things of sense. We must, therefore, approach life's occupations and relationships armed with divine resolve and inspired with our Master's Spirit, and this divine temper when brought to bear on the tasks of life will act like richest alchemy thereon, will transform and ennoble them and make them part and parcel of an immortal's history.

But without further anticipating the more developed teaching of the text, let us again enunciate the two main truths our text implies.

1. We are sent here to do a special task, which is some form of the will of God.

2. In the righteous discharge of that task God gives us food from heaven. Our meat is to do the will of Him that sent us.

I. We are sent here to fulfil God's will in the performance of some special task. That we are here at all is evidence that we are here with a purpose—a purpose on God's part. That we have special faculties, abilities, opportunities is evidence further as to the nature of that purpose, and explains its character; for the delivery of such and such talents to a man constitutes his call, the call of heaven, the call of God: once conscious that we possess these, it is not necessary to ask the purpose or intention of the Divine Giver: His purpose is that we should use that which has been given: the delivery of the means is likewise the requisition of the duty, and the possession of the opportunity is sufficient without any formal demand to create the obligation of service—an obligation which ever varies with the measure of our opportunity.

There is prevalent in some circles the pernicious sophism that certain individuals are placed above work. Nothing could be falser. That a man is above immediate personal want is only stronger evidence of the heavier obligation under which he lies to work for his fellow-men: the more God commits to a man the more shall be required from him, and our responsibilities grow larger with each increase of power and opportunity.

All men are called by God to do some special work, the nature of which He has defined by the nature of the talents He has committed to them. Thus one man is an artisan by

divine appointment, another a simple labourer, another a soldier, another a clerk, another a merchant, another a doctor, another a Christian teacher, another a statesman—all alike by divine appointment, by the will of God. We express this truth, perhaps unconsciously, when we speak of a man's occupation as his "calling"—a word in which there dwells a reminiscence of some spiritual call of God thereto.

We have seen above that a man's talents define the nature of his calling, and that, when he is in his own right place, in the place adapted for the use of his spiritual talents, he is in that to which he is called of God. It may be objected that many or most men made choice of their occupation without any conscious intention of doing the will of God. This is too often true, and so long as they fulfil their occupation in this temper they cannot but lack the very essence of the Christian spirit; for to live a Christian life it is absolutely necessary that we should be sure that, whatever work we are doing, it is God's will we should do it. Yet past forgetfulness of God in our choice of life's work happily proves no bar to our present performance of it in conscious conformity with His will. When once we are committed to a lawful occupation, and the time for making a change, if ever such were possible, has passed, we may feel assured that it is God's will we should abide as we are, and henceforth fulfil our calling as unto Him and not unto ourselves or unto men. The vast majority of men and

women have no option in the matter of life's occupation ; but are drawn into their callings, some by urgent wants or incapacities, others by stern necessities, others by the half-felt influences of life's routine. Every such lawful calling adopted through necessity is a calling of God ; for it is He that framed the necessity and shaped the constraining circumstance. But when a choice of occupation is open, our first question should be, " Where can I best use the talents entrusted to me ? " not " Where can I earn most money ? " or " Where can I win most influence or power ? " The man who has special talents for spiritual work, or for scientific discovery, or teaching, or art, and chooses some money-making business instead, on the ground of its larger financial returns, has debased his God-given faculties and turned his back on the manifest will of heaven.

Our lawful callings, then, my brethren, our callings, for which our various talents of mind and body have fitted us, have come to us through divine appointment, through the will of God.

2. This is indeed a really great truth, but there is a second and no less weighty one, and this is that the righteous fulfilment of our God-assigned callings draws down for us meat and drink from heaven.

We are now in a position to understand more thoroughly the narrowness and incompleteness of the Monastic and Puritan views in these respects, and to see that the so-called

secular life is not, according to the Monastic conception, a pestilential region fatal to the very existence of the religious life, nor yet, according to the Puritan conception, a mere spiritual desert, where the divine life can be sustained only by supplies brought across the border; but that in reality it is a rich and fertile country, specially adapted by God for the furtherance of the religious life and fruitful in every circumstance that can chasten the feelings, strengthen the will, purify the motive, and shape the whole character in conformity with that which Christ would have us to be. Thus in contrast with the Monastic view the full Christian conception maintains that our religious life consists in the righteous discharge of those very duties which the Monastic teaching required its most earnest disciples to renounce and forsake; and, in contrast with the Puritan teaching, it declares that life's duties and occupations are not, as Puritanism taught, mere occasions for spiritual expenditure, but constitute rather, when fulfilled in the right temper, the ordinary source of our spiritual income, our daily bread of life from heaven.

Let us try to grasp this divine truth that in the righteous doing of the daily work of life we receive the food that cometh down from heaven. Our life's occupation so conceived is thus no longer an occasion for the mere spending of the grace we have won apart from it, but thus actually becomes a regular means of gaining spiritual power, faith, and true devotion of

heart : and in his common pursuits and habitual interests man fights his great battle with self-seeking—with the greed of gain, the lusts of the flesh, the love of power,—and as he stands fast therein, in holiest integrity, he finds his worldly employment becomes unto him a spiritual temple of God's abiding presence ; for in the compass of the meanest work that God has made necessary for man there is room for the divinest instruction of heaven—in the maintenance of strictest integrity, in the conquest of the spirit of greed, in the observance of perfect truth, in the exercise of patience, in the control of temper, in the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God. Heaven's best instruction is committed to our daily life, and our life's occupation is thus a spiritual Mount Sinai, where we may meet our God face to face, and learn His will and do His commandments, and get His law written on our hearts.

But if our life's duties are to be our Mount Sinai of spiritual revelation, they must be fulfilled from their divinest motives : then only will they feed us with the bread of life from heaven, and we shall keep everlasting festival, ever reaping richer harvests of reverence and faith and love from every task rightly done and every obligation freely acknowledged and dutifully fulfilled in our daily life. So long, indeed, as we bear about with us the weaknesses of our humanity, we shall need regular hours and seasons of retirement, when the soul must leave the tumult of life, and withdraw

at definite intervals to recruit its exhausted energies of faith and hope and love in solitary communion with God as well as in the common prayers and services of the Church ; but these will be but special recurring feast-days in the eternal festival, and the daily food from heaven will be found in the daily doing of life's work for God.

The daily doing of life's work for God is, then, to be the means of feeding our souls with spiritual food, and that food of life we cannot get elsewhere, nor elsewhere retrieve the losses our unfaithfulnesses therein have wrought us ; but, alas, how often do we find that our way of doing our life's work, instead of feeding us, brings a spiritual famine into our souls. One man so transacts his business that it makes him greedy of gain, forgetful of truth, callous-hearted, irritable, impatient, and so starves out of existence the spiritual principle of his being. His life's occupation yields him only the poorest of its results—the pelf that fills his purse, and robs him of all that makes life worth living, of all that marks him as a child of the Eternal. His doing of life's duties has not brought him food from heaven.

Another so discharges his daily manual task as not to call into exercise a single grace within him : his work is scamped, slovenly done, without any struggle towards perfection and only from the meanest motives that life can furnish : and thus he brings home from his laborious hours no growth of self-respect, no

higher faithfulness, no deeper concentration, no fuller self-forgetfulness, but a discontented, untrue, shallow, self-involved spirit, that has all but lost the image of its divine Original. In his case the words have no application—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

The mother of a household is involved in the daily family cares, in the countless details of management, and the incessant claims on her help and attention of those dependent upon her; but she encounters these without the divine resolve to make them yield her a larger patience, a fuller faith, a wider love, a deeper godliness, and so when the night draws nigh it discovers her anxious, worried, troubled in spirit, farther from God than the morning found her, and with all the shadows of the day's unfaithfulness darkening her present peace. She has not found that to do the will of God has been to her food from heaven.

Let us then, in conclusion, my brethren, resolve as each day's labour dawns upon us to baptize our spirit afresh from on high, and so to make our daily occupations yield us all the instruction they bring from heaven: and whether our life be one of unobtrusive service or of conspicuous rule, of home duty or public obligation, let us determine that henceforth this day and every day it shall be true of us, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." If our lives are lives of lowly service, let the spirit of Christ be ours therein, and, through our willing acceptance and fulfilment

of the divinely ordained necessities of our lot, become true members of the great household and family of God : or if we bear rule, and hold high trusts and responsibilities, let us therein exert our authority as organs of a law that is above us, which we did not make, and which we cannot change, not as enforcing self-will or personal preferences, but as those whose commands are only the expression of a higher obedience unto God ; and thus whether as with the exceptional few our lives form large factors in the history of nations, or as with the vast majority we have no duties beyond the narrow circle of the household or the circumscribed routine of our daily occupation, let it be alike the aim and consummation of our devoutest wishes that herein, as our Master wills it, it shall be our meat to do the will of Him that sent us.

III

“None of us liveth to himself.”—ROM. xiv. 7.¹

THROUGHOUT our entire life, my brethren, from the cradle to the grave, we are giving forth manifold influences, none of us liveth to himself. Some of these influences we set in motion consciously and of set purpose, and some unconsciously and unawares. Our conscious influence is the purposeful creation of our will, whereas our unconscious influence is the involuntary outcome of our character. Our conscious influence is the result of intention, it is exerted on others in the way of instruction, persuasion, or the like: our unconscious influence is the natural result of our character, a real though involuntary disclosure of our inmost being, displaying itself in our passing moods, tones, words, looks.

The former, as we are all aware, is to a great extent ineffectual, whereas the latter never fails to fashion the lives of others. Again, our conscious influence being intentional may be false: we may act on base and unworthy motives, and our outward goodness may but mask the

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, Dec. 5, 1915.

inward baseness of our purpose: our unconscious influence, on the other hand, flowing directly from our character, is an invisible and incorruptible witness to its actual worth. Again, our conscious influence being voluntary can only of course be occasional in its exercise, whereas our unconscious influence being involuntary and being the aggregate result of our entire character gives its tone to the moral atmosphere we breathe, and streams forth continuously on all with whom we come in contact.

We are all familiar in everyday life with the exercise of this influence of the character of others upon us. We all have friends whose society never fails to raise us into higher moods than our own, who draw out all that is good in us, and whose very presence is a rebuke to the meanness and worldliness of our hearts: and, on the other hand, are there not others among our acquaintances who can manage in one short hour to draw out all that is base and uncharitable in us? In either case our friends have taken us into the atmosphere of their own lives: they have not indeed sought to exert any conscious influence upon us, and yet their true inner character has influenced us, and has in effect either raised or debased us.

From such considerations it is manifest that the most important influence we exert in our lives is not our conscious influence, which is the direct creation of the will, but our unconscious influence, which is the immediate creation of

character. This influence, then, being the exact reflection of our character, a transcript of the real temper of our lives, it is clear that we are responsible for the far-reaching results that this influence effects: and this consideration makes our unconscious influence or the influence of character a question of the highest practical importance.

We have already remarked that our conscious influence may be false, but that our unconscious influence is always true to our character. It thus appears that these two influences may conflict. If, whilst yourself a laggard on the path of duty, a time-server amongst Christ's whole-hearted workers, a self-seeker in the kingdom of the self-forgetful, you urge another to take up the cross of high endeavour and self-denial and purer life and to follow Christ, then your real though invisible self will come forth and paralyse your visible efforts: your words will be bereft of inspiration and your inner life will somehow give the lie to the utterance of your lips.

Thus a man's chief power for good lies not in his mere words but in the moral stature and character of the man that stand behind his words and make them at once potent and real. Good men move the world more by what they are than by what they do or say: in other words, by their character and personality; for the power of all powers in shaping human life, when it is best shaped, is character rooted in personality — personality in which truth has

to some extent become incarnate, for, in the sphere of spiritual life, abstract truth and duty, however ably set forth by prophet, lawgiver, or poet, have but little influence. For until they attain to realisation in character or personality they abide alone and barren. And herein we have the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity from all other religions, for whereas other religions base their doctrines on a book, on a scheme of morality or a mode of thought, Christianity finds its essence in the Person of its Founder, in whom Eternal Truth has become incarnate.

We have already remarked that whereas our conscious influence is only an intermittent spring, the influence of character is a stream that floweth forth from us for evermore. And being so constant, its effects are all but immeasurable: it infects the very air we breathe: it touches the springs of action in others: it takes hold of their lives all the more irresistibly as they are unconscious of it, and leads them where otherwise they would never go.

Countless numbers of men accept or reject Christ because of their friends or acquaintances, who have not even a suspicion of the influence they wield. Every man has a power in his person greater than his words: the bad man (or the bad nation), whether he will or no, is a destroyer: he is poisoning the atmosphere around him and is making it a fitting medium for the power of wickedness to work in: his faithless spirit, his materialism, his worldliness

of heart, his sensual desires are taking hold of other lives and drawing them onward with him on the downward path: the life of the good man, on the other hand, is, notwithstanding its many failings, a strength and revelation for his fellow-men; for, however imperfectly, he has nevertheless brought the truth of God into their living experience, so that even amid the storm and stress of the visible world they cannot but recognise a witness to the things invisible.

Thus it is that a few good men become a leaven of goodness in a community. Being good men they will of course work actively for the cause of Christ and of all that is true and just, but their chief power will lie, not in their active efforts, but in the holiness from which they spring, from the consciousness they produce in others of the closeness of their walk with God.

For even the poor blind world can read such lives: it may not indeed be able to understand its need, or set forth its longings for something still afar, or explain why it seeks unto one man and deserts another (when sore beset in its hour of agony): yet all the while through its dim blind eyes it can discern when the fire of God has fallen on a human soul and made it a power for truth and righteousness on earth. And into the soul that has been so consecrated to God a marvellous helpfulness enters: the presence of God in such becomes the most powerful means of developing in others their conscious need

of God ; for such a man not merely gives himself to his neighbours, but previously thereto, as we have already observed, lifts them into the atmosphere in which he lives, and thus makes them capable of receiving and reverencing the best he can impart. His unconscious influence prepares for the influence that he consciously exerts : and thus in the presence of such higher goodness and the lofty possibilities still open to us, secret contrition and high resolve and nobler hope flow down upon us and we grow in the measure of the spiritual greatness we revere.

The chief work of leavening the world by the Christian Faith is done through the influence of character. Men dislike to be swayed by conscious influences : they often resent the direct word of counsel and reproof, but the influence of a good life and the simple authority of real worth never fail to touch them. The unconscious influence that attends on personal truth and uprightness commands their homage and compels their reverence, and thus secures an entrance for the conscious efforts of the Christian teacher.

But let us observe more closely the channels through which the influence of character naturally flows. These channels are the natural relations in which God has placed us—as members of a family, of a Church, of a Nation, and this unconscious influence results in what we call the family, Church, or National character.

We shall confine ourselves to the consideration of the first. Every family creates a spiritual atmosphere of its own. You have hardly crossed its threshold when its influence makes itself felt upon you as elevating, benumbing, or debasing. In the home where some noble Christlike nature is present it is wonderful the influence it wields: wherever the other members of the household go, they cannot escape from it: they bear it with them in their hearts: it moulds their thought and shapes their action. Thus many a man is upheld in the dangerous paths of life and fashioned by the woman that stays at home: and her influence to purify and make strong is paramount where her feet have never trod: and many an invalid there is whose life, to the shallow observer, has been one long purposeless agony of helplessness and pain, and yet who has made the spirit that rules her felt in the lofty regions of thought, in the rough places of trade, and the busy ways of men through some life she has influenced and sent forth to be an inspiration in the school, in the forum, in the city, for purity and for honour. But it is not merely the nature rich in Christian experience that can bring home to others the consciousness of high duties and the knowledge of God. It would indeed be a sad thing if only the loftier nature could wield this unconscious influence that leavens the world with the Spirit of Christ. The world would be narrower, poorer, darker, if

every soul of man, when it became obedient to Christ, did not thereupon become in some degree a power for righteousness.

Even the thin starved life, if only in its dull half-conscious way it keeps faithful to the knowledge that God has vouchsafed it of Himself, becomes an encouragement and help unto others through its testimony to the spiritual and the unseen. Let us consider well, my brethren, the tremendous responsibilities thus incurred through the social affections that unite man to man. Through every such natural tie or affection influences are for ever streaming forth from us: if they are evil they will attract evil and work towards evil: if they are good they will manifest their heavenly source and work far more wonderful transformations than any influence for evil can. For as such a spirit of goodness pursues its path through life, it wakes a kindred goodness in others, and signs and wonders follow in its train, the spiritually blind receive their sight, the leprous sinners are cleansed, the morally halt are made to walk in uprightness: strength is born from weakness, and anthems called forth from despair. And herein we cannot too seriously measure the depth and height of our responsibilities. Only reflect: whoever admires you or loves you is growing insensibly and all but inevitably to be like you. Surely it is well to consider—is the likeness one worth creating? will it shine as an added excellence in your friend's character, or will it

bring darkness and eclipse on the goodness already there? And if you stand in still closer relationships, if it is yours to enjoy a child's reverence or a parent's love, a wife's devotion or a husband's loving trust, reverence the sacred claims these dear hearts have upon you: debase them not through the very love by which they cling to you, but be it your part to raise them to higher moods and through *your* faithfulness secure *their* consecration.

Such admonitions are unhappily far from needless; for, alas! only too often these relationships designed by God as channels of mutual help and blessing become the channels of a manifold curse: and there is many a home this day where the divinely ordained relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, brotherhood and friendship, are serving—not as channels of nobleness and truth, but of corruption for the innocent, of temptation for the weak, and of a worldliness of heart, that sneers down every enthusiasm and stifles every yearning after higher things. Alas! that the channels which God opened from one life to another for their common welfare should prove the bearers of a common curse.

When so regarded we can readily understand why it is that religion seems to produce so little effect in our homes. In some homes where the unconscious influences are unselfish, lofty, and pure there is no occasion for such a question; for there the religion, the high purpose of one member, the unselfishness of

another, the thoroughness of another passes freely into the lives of the rest. But in homes where the very air is impregnated with greed and covetousness, where the tone is mean, where evil tempers are rife, and every member is jealously on his guard against the encroachments of the rest, how can the Spirit of God influence such homes at all? All the unconscious influences are at war with His presence and drown His reproofs in the turmoil of their conflicting claims.

My brethren, where the children of religious parents plunge irrevocably into a worldly and faithless life, there must as a rule be some breach, some inconsistency between the parents' profession and their performance: some part of the life or of the life's work has been withheld from God: some wrong desire has been indulged: principle has had to vail to prudence and duty give place to interest or self-indulgence: and these concessions to the spirit of this world, these sacrifices of truth and duty, made it may be in the darkness of the inmost chamber of the parents' hearts, cannot long be kept secret, the lives of their children are even now proclaiming them from the house-tops. It is not what we teach but what we are that gives its tone to our home and makes it a school for goodness and heaven or for evil and destruction.

Seeing therefore the importance of maintaining the spiritual life within us, I would in conclusion emphasise the value of what are

called in common parlance the means of grace, in other words, private and public prayer. I do not wish to dwell here on the duty of private prayer. Our need of it is obvious. Without such prayer there can be no permanent spiritual progress, no permanent uplifting of the character, no persistent growth in unselfishness, in true heroism, in true saintliness. For prayer in its essence is human desire, human longing, human aspiration lifted Godward and in such high communion transformed into strong resolve and enduring purpose and then sent forth to work God's will on earth. But it is not my wish, I repeat, to insist here on the duty of private prayer, but rather upon that of common prayer whether in the household or the Church. If each of us lived absolutely to himself—if individualism in religion were true, if man had only to care for his own soul, as Plato taught,—then private or individual prayer would be all that is needful. But since pure individualism alike in politics and religion is a false thing, and since the gifts and character of the individual cannot be developed in isolation, then common prayer is a necessity of the spiritual life only second in worth to private. In such common prayer, when it is real, whether it is where only two or three are gathered together—or in the crowded aisles of Church or Minster—the human heart rises to God with a strength which is not its own: it receives from and together with the hearts around the blessed-

ness of the divine vision, and therewith repentance, forgiveness, faith, strength, insight, joy : in such worship every soul gives and receives, but receives indefinitely more than it gives, and all alike are recipients of God's bounty in the degree of their conscious need. In such prayer the reality of the spiritual life in one soul is the measure of its helpfulness to another, and so the thinker or scholar or statesman may derive more spiritual help from the unlearned man at his side than the latter does from him. And where our worship is leavened with the presence and power of such higher life it is the fault of the individual if he goes away from it unblessed ; for God filleth the hungry with good things : all who ask receive, and to him that knocketh is ever the door of the needed grace thrown open, and only those who seek nothing from God receive nothing—such as the worldling and the self-contented, the unforgiving, the covetous, and the sensual : God sends such empty away ; for they seek not Him but themselves.

IV

“If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—ST. JOHN viii. 31, 32 [R.V.].¹

I

IN these words our Lord sets forth the qualification necessary for obtaining the freedom of His kingdom, and this qualification is knowledge of the truth; this alone can enfranchise its possessor and endow him with the character of its divine freedom. The truth here designed is spiritual and ultimate; but this principle holds not only in the spiritual world, but also in the world of nature and of man. In all alike freedom comes through knowledge of truth.

It is this necessary dependence, moreover, of true freedom, intellectual, emotional, practical, on the knowledge of truth that makes the search after truth a paramount duty, and calls down our reprobation on all contented acquiescence in the ignorance of any truth whatever. If, indeed, no such relation between freedom and knowledge of truth subsisted, then indifference to its claims could entail no moral responsibility,

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, October 4, 1914.

nor error in its quest any practical loss. But since knowledge is needful to right thought, feeling, and action, the duty of searching after truth lies upon us as one of the gravest of our responsibilities.

To be free in any province of human life we must first discover the laws that regulate it, else our efforts after freedom will constantly alternate between licence and slavery, and our ignorant attempting of what may not be will, through consequent failure, lead us to despair of that which may, and thus the scene of our licence will inevitably become the grave of our freedom.

But a brief review of the operation of this principle in the worlds of nature and of man will make more intelligible its action and importance in the realm of spiritual truth.

First, then, our knowledge of the laws of nature teaches us not to attempt the impossible ; it bids us abandon the problem of perpetual motion, the search after the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life ; it frees us from superstitions and errors which prevent us from achieving the possible, and instructs us how to master the powers of nature and bend them to our will. With such triumphs of science no age, perhaps, is more familiar than our own. But such conquests of nature cannot rise higher than themselves : they cannot impart any moral strength or elevation ; they minister to the sensual element in man, and make him more and more dependent on his material surround-

ings, and so tend to degrade and enslave him to the earth, unless withstood by some higher principle. Man masters the powers of nature, but only in turn to become their dependent, their slave. Knowledge, therefore, of the world of nature can give man freedom only in physical thought and action, while, on the other hand, the fruits of such knowledge tend to enthrall his moral and spiritual powers. It is not, therefore, such knowledge that can make man truly free.

In the next place, on our knowledge of the world of man depends our moral freedom—on our knowledge of our personal duty as individuals, of our social duties as members of a community, and of our patriotic duties as members of a nation. This knowledge we gather from the study of our inner being, with its appetites, passions, and principles; from the study of human action recorded in history, which, as Schiller finely remarks, is a record of God's judgments on human conduct; and from the study of human thought embodied in language, literature, and philosophy. Such knowledge as this warns us against the encroachments of the lower elements in our nature, against such doctrines as teach that the prosperity of states or individuals consists in their power to gratify man's animal nature, to satisfy his various desires, and accumulate in the form of wealth the means of such satisfaction. Now, moral knowledge assures us that the substitution of such contrivances for the

truth and righteousness, that can alone exalt our humanity, can never secure for individuals or nations a happiness which has not its spring in their own character, nor shelter them from the retributions that must inevitably befall baseness of aim and degradation of life. It teaches man to cast off all fear but that of wrong-doing; it tells him that it boots little that the head bows to no foreign yoke if, after all, the heart is the victim of vice, or ignorance, or fear, and that his worst enemies are not those that invade his outward interests, but those that establish themselves within; and that in the reality of things he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. It condemns that hitherto accepted lie, that statesmen and nations are not bound by the same morality as individuals; it shows that when vice stains the lives of princes, or falsehood sways the policy of cabinets, it breeds a moral pestilence in the nation at large, and teaches the subject that indifference to moral law that has the sanction of his ruler's example; it proclaims that the government that uses its power for selfish ends, or sacrifices the interests of state to those of party, or the few to the factions of the many, becomes an authoritative preacher of crime, and prepares the citizen to betray the public interest, or to become venal when it serves his turn; it demonstrates the worthlessness of that peace which rests on the balancing of conflicting egotisms or the equilibrium of contrary forces; it declares that

a selfish policy to the stranger must encourage the growth of selfishness at home, and that bad passions in a people's foreign relations will finally issue in internal and domestic strifes.

In short, knowledge of the world of man furnishes a complete code of personal and social ethics, and frees man, if he fulfil it in life, from errors and superstitions, from falsehoods and vices, and endows him with moral strength and inward might. Verily to such knowledge the words of our Lord apply, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Ay, there's the rub—"Happy are ye if ye do them." Alas, who is equal to these things? Here it is that we must fall back on ultimate truth; for the knowledge of truth in its lower spheres cannot enfranchise the spirit of man that transcends them. Here it is that we must have recourse to truth—no longer in its dismembered parts, but in its final and integral unity in God. And he that is filled with the knowledge of the Most High is freed from the bondage of the senses and of self, and, superior to every fear of man, is and can be the only faithful servant of truth in the varied tasks of life. For only the knowledge of the Eternal that springs from abiding in Him can deliver man from the fascinations of the material world, its coarser sensualities, or its more refined aestheticisms; only the personal knowledge of God can free him from the bondage of evil custom, from the tyranny of public opinion, from the stupid idolatrous worship of majorities, from the deceits

and thralldom of self. This is the truth that makes man free indeed; but it makes him free only in the measure of his self-surrender to it, and thus the freedom of God's servants is as various as the degrees of their willing surrender. But we cannot determine the extent of this freedom apart from the two following questions:—

I. On what evidence are we to receive divine or ultimate truth—on the evidence of authority, or on its own?

II. With what motive are we to seek truth—for its own sake, or for the sake of its rewards?

We shall now deal with I. Are we to receive divine or ultimate truth on the evidence of authority, or on its own? On this question the Christian world is divided. The Latin Church unhesitatingly answers, "On the evidence of authority." The answers of the other Churches of Christendom are not as pronounced and clear as might be desired, though they profess that to a large extent truth is to be received on its own evidence. Whence arises this conflict of opinions? For the solution let us go back to the earliest ages of the Church. At that time there prevailed two well-defined conceptions of God—one, that of God's transcendence; the other, that of God's immanence. The former, if taken absolutely, conceives God as the Absolute and the Incommunicable, the Unapproachable, who can have no fellowship or relation with man. Man is thus shut off hopelessly from direct intercourse with God; an impassable gulf lies between. The latter,

the belief in God's immanence, if taken absolutely—that is, to the exclusion of belief in God's transcendence—would issue in sheer Pantheism. Hence it follows that we cannot rightly accept either to the exclusion of the other: in other words, we must accept the truth of both in some degree, as set forth in the teaching of Christ and the New Testament. There, however, we should observe that, while the transcendence of God above the world is maintained, the chief emphasis is laid on God's immanence, and God is conceived of as present in the world, as both the Creator and the Stay of life, the sole Source and Inspirer of truth in man, even as St. Paul declares, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being"; and St. John, "Christ is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This teaching of the New Testament was accepted and developed by the early Greek Church, which based most of its own teaching on the divine truth of God's immanence. This conception explains the possibility of the Incarnation, and gives it a more spiritual meaning: it makes sin the transgression, not of commandments written on tables of stone or of arbitrary appointment, but of a law written on the heart. But with the great Latin Father, Augustine, a new theology arose, which laid the chief emphasis on God's transcendence. God and man were thus severed by a boundless gulf; God was the infinitely Good, the infinitely Holy; man the utterly

depraved. Hence, there could be no direct communion between them, and, as man had lost the faculty of judging truth, God could make known His will to him only through miracles and external authorities. And along with this doctrine of total depravity sprang into being other non-Christian conceptions, such as the damnation of unbaptized infants, the denial of free will, election to eternal life or eternal damnation, and a host of other immoral or irrational dogmas, many of which were in later times received into the Protestant Church through the influence of Calvin, but found no recognition in the Early Greek Church, or were only recognised in order to be condemned.

This doctrine of God's absolute transcendence was, in the hands of Augustine, the fruitful mother of error. It gave birth to an ultra-pessimism; man was radically bad; his only hope lay in an outward election through divine caprice; it admitted asceticism as a Christian principle, which in its origin is a purely heathen practice; for, as our nature was utterly gone in original sin, every natural gratification was of the essence of sin, and so was to be forsworn. And, finally, it discredited the competence of the reason to pronounce on truth; for man's mind was involved in the general corruption of his being, and so truth was to be received on the evidence of external authority, as there was none other trustworthy. These features of Augustine's theology, its

pessimism, its asceticism, and the delusiveness of human reason cast the whole evidence of truth on external authority, and in no little measure prepared the way for the Papacy wherein, it was claimed, this authority resided.

In this adaptation of Christianity to a lower environment there is a retrograde movement of Christian thought; nevertheless this return to the reign of external authority, as under later Judaism, was necessary in order to school the new races overrunning Europe, and to discipline them into fitness for the higher life of spiritual freedom. And so, during the Middle Ages, men were treated as moral minors, and were suffered to receive only such truth as had the sanction of the papal chair. But once the age of unthinking barbarism had passed away, and the mind regained its freedom, Augustine's theology and the Papacy became discredited; and, where their influence still prevails, it is a proof that there are those who are still the victims of misleading views of God, and so still imagine themselves in need of a religion based wholly, or all but wholly on external authority. And when in modern times men fall back on authority as the sole evidence of truth, their action springs from unbelief in the immanence of God, in the divineness of man's nature, and so in the reality of the Incarnation; for the Incarnation would not have been possible were not man akin to God, unless, indeed, we are to regard the union of the two natures in Christ to be merely artificial, and as

subsisting in irreconcilable dualism. It is on this principle that the secession of John Henry Newman to the Church of Rome is to be explained; for not to his faith, but, as it has been frequently pointed out, to his profound unbelief in man's capacity for truth, was due his submission to the Roman See. By such submission to *mere* authority as the source of truth he thereby denied the competence of man to know truth for himself—a competence undoubtedly implied in every appeal of God to man, and, above all, in the possibility and fruits of the Incarnation. In fact, once we deny the witness of the reason, there is nothing to save us from universal scepticism. So it was with Newman. Starting with the Latin idea of God's transcendence, he passed on logically to believe in man's depravity and utter incompetence for truth, and was thus finally plunged in the gulf of a fathomless scepticism. To escape from this he laid hold on external authority, and sought protection against his unbelief in Roman infallibility. Thus the logical outcome of belief in God's absolute transcendence is either scepticism or submission to an infallible authority. And so the soul is stripped of spiritual freedom, and men are no longer sons of God, with His law written on their hearts; no longer sons but slaves; slaves to miraculous signs, slaves to lying wonders, slaves to papal infallibilities.

Is this slavery the fruit of the Incarnation? Is this thralldom the fulfilment of Christ's

promise that He shall make us free? Nay, verily, does He not declare unto us, "Abide in My word, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"?—aye, free to launch forth on the limitless ocean of truth with His word as our strength and stay, and His Spirit as our Inspirer and Guide, where sight indeed may fail, but faith ever lights up the darkness with the presence of God.

We have thus briefly traced in part the genesis of the idea of authority in Christianity, and have found that it springs from the false doctrines of man's utter depravity and the incompetency of the reason, as taught by Augustine, who, as we have seen, inferred these from the conception of God's absolute transcendence. External authority, then, in matters of belief, whether as impersonated in its final development in Roman infallibility, or in minor forms in the other Churches of Christendom, is, when it is enforced over minds that have come of age, an immoral conception, and stayed on a lie. The spirit of man, being the self-revelation of God, can accept truth on no evidence save its own.¹

And yet authority, when duly limited and rightly conceived, has its place in the Christian Church; for in the life of every man who is not weak in mind or lacking in judgment there are

¹ It is not implied here that the body of Christian truths is limited to the experience of the individual believer, but that the individual believer is bound by the truths he has so experienced. Beyond his individual experience there is an infinite range of truth to be assimilated in the blessed immortality that awaits him, as there is also beyond the collective experience of the whole Church on earth.

two ages—the age of tradition and the age of reason : the age of tradition when in childhood he receives with unquestioning trust the positive religious teaching of the Church ; and the age of reason when man, no longer a minor, has attained his moral majority, and cannot by the laws of his being hold a truth save in so far as it has become a personal conviction. Thus the Church adapts her teaching to the wants of her children. To the young she addresses herself in the voice of authority, and inculcates the faith that, surviving every vicissitude of change, has lighted her path and kindled her devotion in her progress down the centuries, though of this faith they can have no conviction as yet. To the mature in mind she appeals with the persuasiveness of truth and reason ; and, both in principle and spirit, true mistress of the keys of knowledge, she lays before them the fruit of her varied religious experiences throughout the two past millenniums, the sifted wisdom of the ages, the accumulated insight of generation on generation. She argues, exhorts, teaches, but she only teaches aright when, like her Master, she teaches as one having authority and not as the Scribes, that is, when her teaching of itself brings home conviction to the heart and reason of her people.

Many in modern times, dwelling on the importance of personal conviction as opposed to traditional faith, have even urged that children should not be given positive religious

teaching, but should be left to win conviction for themselves in later years when the age of conviction arrives. But it would just be as reasonable to say that a babe or child should not be fed gratuitously, because in later years he must find his own living and feed himself.

The religion of childhood is one of tradition and trust, received at the hands of authority ; the religion of the mature mind is that of conviction won through the witness of man's spirit to the truth.

Such, then, is the scope of authority in the Church of Christ, and such the province of the reason.

How different is this to the actual method pursued by large sections of the Christian Church. Confining our attention to the Church of England, we see in every direction that the habit of looking to authority on religious questions is being inculcated—a habit which cannot fail to be injurious in the highest degree, as it rests on a false conception of man's nature, and likewise turns him away from the duty of obtaining a certainty that has some worth by claiming to furnish him with a certainty that is worse than worthless. With this authority of "The Church" so persistently dinned into our ears, its teachers generally manage with admirable sleight-of-hand to invest their own utterances and personality, and the spectacle is not infrequent of priestly assumption and dogmatism inflating the bosoms of men of the most mediocre intelligence. As

we have already seen, the ultimate goal of all teaching that seeks to silence thought by the voice of authority is submission to Rome, or absolute unbelief.

Now that we have grasped the limited office of authority in religion, we can understand how superstition and unbelief—an apparent antithesis in error—are generally found in company; for when a man, discrediting his reason, submits to external authority, he must become the victim of superstition in general, and more especially of this particular superstition—that the thought and life of the Church for any one age should become the unquestionable rule for all ages, and be stereotyped for indefinite reproduction. Thus, religion becomes after a manner a revived antiquarianism, and its votaries seek, by imitating the habits and repeating the phrases of a dead past, to become the inheritors of the spirit that inspired that past. Such persons can imitate, and in fact do imitate, everything but its inspiration. And so religion becomes a routine, and faith fastens itself on some outward creed or discipline. Of such outward or retrospective faith it is the unfailing lot to be full of alarm in the face of every danger. Failing to rest on Him who is ever leading His Church into larger truth throughout the ages, it has further failed to draw from past conquests the assurance of future victory. God has indeed overthrown the scepticism of past centuries, but can He, it asks, overcome the subtler unbeliefs of the present?

This despairing, fearing tone belongs not to the reality of faith, the freedom of truth; for such can own neither present fear nor future foreboding.

In conclusion, the character fashioned by a religion of routine is equally disappointing and helpless when confronted by unusual situations; for those so disciplined are generally unequal to any exceptional call of duty, and discover radical defects of character, when unlooked-for emergencies draw them beyond the range of their narrow routine. Their forms of duty, in fact, have failed to reach inherent faults of character—avarice, meanness, jealousy, envy, and unforgivingness; and yet they go on believing, like the young ruler, in their goodness, because they do certain religious duties, and accept certain forms of religious thought and language.

We might as reasonably hope to become Elijahs by wearing the girdle of hide and the sheepskin mantle, as by such unspiritual faith and the routine of such formal observance to be true disciples of Him, whose faith is transfiguring inspiration, and whose service is perfect freedom.

V

"If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—ST. JOHN viii. 31, 32 [R.V.].¹

II

LAST Sunday afternoon we dealt with the question: On what evidence are we to accept truth—on the evidence of authority or on its own?

We must now address ourselves to the second question proposed in our first sermon.

II. With what motive are we to seek truth—for its own sake, or for the sake of its rewards?

As we examine the Old Testament we find a perplexing diversity of teaching on this question. Thus we cannot ignore the fact that the greater part of Deuteronomy and almost the whole Book of Proverbs, and not a few of the Psalms teach religion as a matter of prudence. They all but definitely say: You are to seek God that it may be well with you. But in many places in the Old Testament this low conception of religion is displaced by the higher and true one.

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, October 11, 1914.

Thus one of the Psalmists declares: "Thy loving kindness is better than life itself"; in other words, nothing that life can offer is to be compared with the blessedness of communion with God.

Further, in the Book of Job, this view that religion is a sort of insurance to secure our future well-being is not only implicitly condemned, but it is as strongly denounced as it is possible to do so in words; for the writer ascribes this low view of religion to Satan, when in the first chapter he writes: "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce Thee to Thy face." Thus Satan maintains that man can entertain no love for God that is not rooted in selfishness. One object of the Book of Job is to prove the falseness of this view.

And when we pass from Judaism to Christianity we discover the same perplexing diversity of teaching.

We are all but too familiar with those phases of religion which represent Christianity as a gigantic machinery of reward and penalty. Some preachers present these as the essence and substance of the Christian religion; others, deeming that the exhibition of rewards and

punishment is wholly alien to the spirit of Christianity, enforce it only in the character of a disinterested faith; while others, full of perplexity, alternate on no fixed principle between these opposing views. Is it possible in the midst of such perplexing diversity to discover some principle which can give us clear guidance and disclose what fragment of truth underlies each or any of the above views?

First, then, if that view which regards Christianity as a system of rewards and penalties be true to facts, it must repel the men of purest life and motive, and stimulate in its disciples the very vices from which it ought to deliver them, namely, cowardice and selfishness. Cowardice and selfishness do not change their nature by changing their object. They can never make a man Christlike, though they may assimilate him to the agents of evil who believe and tremble.

Whatever partial truth, therefore, this phase of Christian teaching may have, once it is represented as the pith and substance of the Gospel, it is no better than a baseless lie.

On the other hand, can the contrary view claim to be a full exposition of Christian truth? Are the offers of Christ addressed only to pure disinterestedness? Are no motives appealed to save those that are highest and noblest in man? Does Christianity never stoop to enkindle with hope of reward or menace with fear of doom? Undoubtedly it does: and for this reason we must admit that this phase of teach-

ing fails to explain the practice of our Lord and His Apostles, who certainly at times appealed to lower motives.

As for those who alternate without reason between these views, though on the score of logical consistency they stand self-condemned, yet they are in practice Apostolic. The principles, then, that justify such practice it is at present our task to discover.

This question has been frequently a cause of contention in the Church, and at no period in the Church's history did this controversy rage so bitterly as in the eighteenth century. Towards the close of that century, Molinos, a Spanish priest, a man of the loftiest purity of character, issued a "Guida Spirituale" or "Spiritual Guide" for the faithful, in which his main teaching was that *Christian perfection* consisted in the pure love of God, without hope of reward or fear of punishment. But such a doctrine was in the eyes of the Jesuits heretical, and, notwithstanding the personal friendship of Pope Innocent XI. for Molinos, Molinos expiated this offence by seven years' imprisonment in the dungeons of the Roman Inquisition. But this controversy was carried on not only in Rome, but also in France, and the two opposing protagonists were certainly amongst the most eminent persons of their time, Archbishop Fénelon and Bishop Bossuet. Fénelon maintained that men could and ought to be influenced by the pure and disinterested love of God, but Bossuet and Louis XIV. thought differently, and, owing

to the pressure that Louis brought to bear on the Vatican, the aged and pacific Pope Innocent XII. was forced to condemn Fénelon, and Fénelon was obliged to read the papal condemnation of himself in his own cathedral. But though the Pope condemned Fénelon owing to the pressure brought upon him, he in reality sympathised with him, for he said at the time that "Fénelon might have erred from excess of love to God, but Bossuet had sinned through a lack of love to his neighbour."

This view, twice officially authorised by the Papacy, stands out in unpleasant contrast with that of St. Bernard in the twelfth century, whose well-known hymn, in its English translation, is familiar to us all.

My God, I love Thee : not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.

Not from the love of gaining aught,
Nor seeking a reward ;
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever loving Lord !

Another protest against this low conception of religion is that of Eckhard, a mystic of the fourteenth century, who declared that some people loved God on the same grounds as they loved a cow—that is, purely for what they could gain out of such a relation.

In the English Church there has been no such conflict of opinion on this question amongst its chief divines. Thus Jeremy

Taylor writes (*Sermon on Growth in Grace*): "He that is grown in grace pursues virtue purely and simply for its own interest. When persons come to that height of grace, and love God for Himself, that is but heaven in another sense." But though the chief divines and thinkers in the English Church are at one on this question, multitudes of preachers at all times and great missionaries like John Wesley have frequently made use of the lower motives of fear and punishment in their popular addresses. How, we may ask, is such a divergency on the part of Christian teachers to be explained? Are those who preach the doctrine of the disinterested love of God alone right? and are those who preach the doctrine of rewards and punishments wholly wrong? It is now our task to show briefly that in certain respects both are legitimate in their own spheres, and that wisdom is herein justified of all her children, though we shall find that the latter doctrine has only a provisional value, whereas the other sets forth the full and ultimate truth of God.

Let us now proceed with our inquiry. To begin, then, the Church finds men possessed of countless diversity of character, from the unselfish and heroic, down to the selfish and base, and to each type of character she addresses herself in such terms as it can best understand: to the highest and noblest in each she makes her earnest invocation; but where disinterested affections are wanting

she appeals to the best that a man is capable of, though that best be no more than an enlightened or even a short-sighted selfishness; for Christianity, if it is to be equal to universal empire, must deal with men as it finds them. Christianity does, then, as well as Judaism, appeal to the lower motives of prudence and selfishness, through its machinery of rewards and punishments. How, then, can it be called a pure and disinterested religion, where no man seeketh his own, but each his brother's good? This, then, is our immediate subject of inquiry; and we shall find that though in certain instances Christianity does appeal to interested motives, yet the true acceptance of Christianity always makes men disinterested; and though its rewards and penalties constitute its attraction for the self-regarding, yet it holds inexorably that, if those men who embrace Christianity for selfish reasons continue to hold it solely for the same reasons, they can never attain to its rewards, and they can never escape its punishments.

The law, St. Paul declares, was not made for a righteous man, but for the ungodly and disobedient; it was added because of transgression. Let us take, as an instance of the working of this principle, the law of forgery. Now, clearly, this law was not enacted for us, for it does not restrain us. Were it abrogated from the statute book to-morrow, we would not commit forgery; it is something far above legal penalty that restrains us. But there are

some whom this law does restrain, who would commit forgery but from fear of its penalties. Hence the law regarding forgery was made for these, and is designed to discipline and school them into higher moods, in which such temptations will fail to move them. The object of law is, then, but temporary—to lead men to a higher region of motive and life, where they will act rightly without its restraint, and where its bondage of fear will give place to willing obedience. So long as we do not love right and do right for its own sake, we are still under the law, as under a schoolmaster, which disciplines with its powers of restraint and compulsion till it lifts us from hireling service into the obedience of sons. In some respects, nay, rather, in many, we are all still under the schoolmaster.

If we turn our attention to the education of childhood and youth, we shall find a still better illustration of our principle. At that elementary stage man is trained by a system of coercion and reward to live and learn ultimately from higher motives. We punish children for wrong-doing and disobedience, not with the intention that they shall always abstain from wrong-doing and disobedience through fear of punishment, but that they may finally become good and obedient from higher motives. We reward a child for doing right, not, surely, that he may always love knowledge for its rewards, and live aright from motives of self-interest, but that he may

come ultimately to seek knowledge for itself, and to love righteousness and truth for their own sake.

We are now better able to understand how that Christianity, being the great educator of the human race, must from educational, apart from other reasons, have such means as penalty and reward for dealing with its backward and unpromising pupils. Low and gross natures, closed against the appeals of disinterested love and holiness, require the discipline of reward and penalty. But the single end of all such discipline is not to retain them in their material bondage, but to make them spiritually free and disinterested; and where Christianity fails to do so, it leaves man's nature as unredeemed from selfishness as it found it, as far from God, as nigh to hell. Thus, then, we explain the rationale of reward and penalty, as a part of Christian ethics. But, just as with children, we generally find that the higher motives, when rightly appealed to, are more effectual as an educational instrument than the lower and baser, so also with humanity at large; for there is hardly any child of man that is not open to the appeals of disinterested love, and responsive to the expectant regard of a brother's faith; and where this is so, to appeal to lower motives will tend only to debase, and perhaps to extinguish some gleam of divine unselfishness still dimly burning in the darkened heart.

This lower phase of Christian preaching was naturally effective with the rude and barbarous nations of mediaeval Europe, but in modern times to present the chief burthen of the Gospel in such dress betrays a fatal ignorance of the age we live in, and can only serve to alienate from Christianity those men that, really impregnated by its spirit, sway the hearts of their fellows towards higher things, and themselves lead the way.

We have hitherto dealt only with the individual in relation to this problem. Let us turn aside for a moment to consider the nation in regard to the same problem. Here, alas! we must at once confess that the relations of the various nations of the earth are in most cases to a large extent, or in some cases wholly, governed by heathen principles, and we have only to turn to the terrible war, in which all the great European Powers are engaged, as an illustration of this fact. Germany openly maintains that might is right: that there is no power above the nation, and that accordingly what the nation wills is right. With a power so actuated there can be no truce or peace till this anti-Christian doctrine is destroyed and the German nation has been brought to recognise that the same laws which hold good between individuals should in their essence at all events be recognised as binding among nations.

Art, science, philosophy, patriotism acknowledge no devotion save such as springs

from singleness of heart ; and so when their votaries render them service only with a view to ultimate gain, they strike them from their roll of heroes and kindle enthusiasm at purer shrines. And, likewise, in Christianity, so far as self-seeking in any shape underlies our Christian pretensions, so far are they without foundation. God rewards those that diligently seek Him ; but the self-seeker seeks not God, but himself ; and God is no rewarder of such. Surely it is needless to add that men who profess the Christian Creed or frequent the Christian Services, either with a view to keep on good terms with society, or better their professional or commercial prospects, must shut themselves out from all the reality of the Christian life. And, again, so far as from mere fear of doom, or hope of reward, we enter on the Christian life, we cannot receive of that life in its fulness, perhaps hardly in its essence, unless contact with the heart of God—and all such contact is redemptive—wins us from selfish calculations into unfeigned hatred of sin and disinterested love of goodness and of God.

How often man thus comes to God in the spirit of the hireling. The story of the Prodigal admirably describes the approach of such. After that, in the far country, he had spent all his living, and was plunged into famine and want, the thought of all that he had lost and of what he yet might gain gave birth to his premeditated confession—the

concluding words of which manifest the low origin of his repentance: "Make me as one of thy hired servants"—those hired servants, the comfort of whose lot came now so vividly before him—"they had bread enough and to spare." But true repentance makes no stipulation save for forgiveness; and so, when at last the prodigal falls into the outstretched arms of a father's love, the heinousness of his life comes home to him, and the greatness of the love he had sinned against; and so all thought of self disappears, and he no longer bargains for a servant's place. His words witness only to his deep contrition, and all his aim now is to be reconciled to his father's love, to be forgiven his sin, his deep and infinite transgression.

And thus ever in the world of men there are those who at the outset seek God from low and self-regarding motives, but by and by, as they grow into knowledge of Him, are won from their half-selfish allegiance into pure and unselfish love.

We are all familiar with this change of attitude in human life. How often one man seeks the friendship of another because of his wealth or position, or some such unworthy aim, and afterwards comes to love him for himself, despite the subsequent loss of all such outward accessories. Herein we have a perfect analogy of the change of relation between the human soul and God.

To propose rewards in the ordinary sense

to the soul that has risen into the life of self-forgetful love would be to insult its spirit and offer indignity to its most hallowed affections. It cannot but resent the thought of being bribed into goodness, or wheedled by gain into right behaviour. Yet there is a reward it covets; but this is no merely personal or selfish one, but a growth in wisdom and love, in capacity and serviceableness, in a life of larger spiritual freedom and nobler opportunities—an increase of goodness through goodness. “The reward of doing one duty,” says an old Rabbi, “is the power of fulfilling another”; and thus divine reward is rather of character than of satisfaction, is incidental to the Christian life, and not its conscious aim. And though divine reward takes many a shape, it always follows in the line of our works—a deeper peace, a purer holiness, a more unclouded communion, or a summons to wider serviceableness, to the performance of harder tasks, to severer trials of endurance, to loftier heights of self-abnegation.

I ask no heaven till earth be Thine,
Nor glory-crown, while work of mine
Remaineth here; when earth shall shine
Among the stars,
Her sins wiped out, her captives free,
Her voice a music unto Thee,
For crown, new work give Thou to me!
Lord, here am I!

We have now arrived at the close of our inquiry, and our conclusion is that that man

is truly free who bows to no authority save the God who witnesses within him; whose mind is open to all light and truth, whencesoever they may come; whose creed rests not on the mere warrant of tradition, but on the strength of personal conviction; who, in the power of the divine life, overcoming the bondage of the senses, the world, and self, loves goodness and God for their own sake, and, through the crucifixion of the lower nature, finds that true spiritual freedom, which consists in the unhampered action of his best powers, in a life rich in the expression of the divine.

VI

"Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all."—ST. MARK x. 43, 44 [R.V.].¹

I

By the advent of Christianity into the world a new ideal of greatness was introduced, a new standard of human conduct established.

According to the popular ideal of the old world the greatest man was he who could command the services of others and be commanded of none. Subjection, the ancient world thought, was degrading, work irksome, and pleasure difficult of attainment. Hence the greatest and most to be envied of men was he who was subject to none, waited upon by all, and able to compass and enjoy every known pleasure.

And so a despot of the Babylonian type or in later times a Nero or Tiberius was popularly regarded as the greatest amongst mankind, as possessing unbounded power, unlimited wealth, and exemption from all degrading toil. To rule, not to serve, to be ministered unto,

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, July 9, 1916.

not to minister, was the ideal of the ancient world. And it cannot be doubted that with vast multitudes in the modern world the old ideal still bears sway, and their confessed or unacknowledged ambition is the vulgar desire after power, or wealth, and this in its most degrading form, as a mere means of delivering them from the necessities of work. There are countless numbers this day working only because they must work, who if this necessity were removed would, like commonplace pagans of old, give themselves wholly over to sloth or self-indulgence. All the centuries of Christian discipline have failed to awake them to the requirements of duty, the nobleness of toil, the divine necessities of service. This same self-seeking spirit, though in a higher mood, moved the heart of the disciples of our Lord. They knew that their Master was come to establish a kingdom. The very word was calculated to arouse in them notions of precedence and superiority in a temporal sense, and their minds often dwelt on the high offices they were to fill in the Messiah's Kingdom. These ambitions which they nursed in their hearts burst out from time to time in the strifes and jealousies that rent the peace of the Twelve, and from idle dreams of future glory, they readily pressed to idle contentions as to which should have the chief place therein. These disputes had broken out on the way to Capernaum from the Mount of Transfiguration: they were revived even after the Last

Supper, and, when the thoughts of the Lord were fixed in steadfast sorrow on the dark tragedy of the coming day, His disciples were engaged in hot debate as to the places of distinction they should severally hold in His Kingdom. This self-regarding spirit our Lord firmly rebukes: My Kingdom is not of this world: the spirit of My servants is not a self-seeking one: the greatest among My followers is not he who can command the services of all the others, and be commanded of none, as it is in earthly kingdoms; but the greatest is he who renders the widest service and makes his superiority felt none otherwise than in the superabundance of his services to those that need them. The disciple shall be as his Master, and your Master has come not to be ministered unto but to minister: he, therefore, that would be greatest among you shall be servant of all. To serve, not to rule, is the distinctive characteristic of My Kingdom.

How dissimilar is the greatness herein set forth to the conception which popularly prevails amongst us, and which is an embodiment of the spirit of decent, self-complacent paganism.

I. According to the popular canon of greatness, great men are the men of strong individualities, high powers, lofty genius, vast resources, no matter how selfishly they use such endowments. And as the greatness thus conceived does not involve the moral use of such powers, the world condones the sins and frailties of its great ones and exempts them

from the canons of conduct, which regulate the actions of ordinary men.

Now at the outset Christianity denounces the idea that great capacities or genius in themselves constitute true greatness, and teaches that only he is great who consciously contributes to the real progress of the race, who, consciously renouncing selfish aims, works in harmony with the divine laws, that are slowly shaping human life and working towards the universal good, and that it is only the labours of such that are built on the rock of reality, and that in some form must last for ever. Thus according to the canon of greatness enunciated by Christ: only those who truly work for the service of God and man have any claim to the name great. According to this canon great capacities are not a necessity in order to possess true greatness: it is the spirit and devotedness of a life, and not its mere powers, that give it a place in the kingdom of Christian greatness.

If great powers and capacities in themselves made their possessors great, some of the worst and most destructive of the human race could rightly lay claim to this designation. But there have been great thinkers, great artists, great generals, great scientists, powerful emperors and war-lords, who have by no means been great men, and whose lives have in many respects been a curse and a destruction to the race, to whom they should have proved a blessing, and whose influence with its

evil attractiveness has swept over the world as a spiritual pestilence. I need hardly remind you how many great soldiers, statesmen, and writers of this character Germany has produced in the last century and a half, whose influence on their country has been demoralising and soul-destroying. Surely so far as this world is concerned it had been better for them that they had not been born. Moreover, when great capacities refuse to serve the ends for which they were given, God uses them for the good of others, as instruments of destruction or warning, as examples of the misery and despair to which souls are reduced, when all the good ends and callings of God are forfeited and lost. God makes even the wrath of men to serve Him: "even for this purpose have I raised thee up."

True greatness, then, depends not on greatness of faculty, but on the spirit in which the faculty is used; not on great powers, but on the faithfulness of the service rendered with whatever powers a man is endowed; and from this service none are excluded, and the terms of this law are: every endowment of faculty is likewise a requisition of service, and the higher the gifts the wider the sphere of service required. Thus in the kingdom of Christian greatness there is a place for every capacity, from the man of one talent to the man of ten. When viewed from this standpoint the shamelessness of the world's judgment, to which we have already adverted, forthwith betrays itself,

which would exempt great intelligences from the ordinary canons of conduct, and excuse sins and frailties in the strong, which it is so ready to reprobate in the weak. Let us take as an instance, genius, which is undoubtedly the highest form of mere power in the world, and weigh well its relation to the law of service. It is a generally received axiom that genius is its own law; but this law, we should bear in mind, is not the arbitrary or capricious creation of its own self-will, but has actually been discovered and reverently followed by it in the sphere of reality. Such discoveries of genius are ever enlarging the bounds of knowledge and duty, and leaving the old limits far behind. But such discoveries do not lead to licence: nay, they make imperative a wider range of obedience, and constitute a progress from the service of lower to that of higher law. So far, therefore, is genius, whether it be that of the poet, statesman, or scientist, from having any claim to immunity from the requirements of law, that there belongs to it the stern prerogative of being judged by a loftier standard than our own, because that with open eyes it beholds a loftier vision of truth than ours. But if while we rightly honour the great intelligence in its own province we make light of its sins in another, we are doing what we can to pervert its judgment, and turn it from a blessing into a curse, and are persuading it through our blind idolatries to believe that its great gifts in one field atone for its immoralities in another, and

that, though much has been committed to it, yet little will be required at its hands. The world's adulation is at once the tempter and the destroyer of every great faculty or power that lends itself to its seductions.

II. From this criticism of the pagan conception of greatness we proceed afresh to enunciate the law of true greatness: every man is great exactly in the measure of his service, and he that is greatest renders the widest service of all. According to this law the greatness of a prophet, patriot, poet, does not differ in kind but only in degree from that of his least abundantly endowed brother. The man of one talent, if only he serves faithfully in the measure of his capacity, contributes as truly as the man of ten talents to the advance of the Kingdom of Heaven, though of course in a proportionally less degree. A man does not need singular or extraordinary gifts to qualify him for such greatness, nor can he by any effort of will or act of taking thought add a cubit to his mental stature; but he can frame for himself a high conception of duty in the sphere allotted to him, can shape his life thereby, and so fulfil the life's plan designed for him of God; for God has a plan for every man's life, and his life's service is reckoned on in the universal whole. Accordingly, when a man accepts his life's duty as from God, his life becomes a partial revelation of God's thought, of the Eternal Order: it becomes an unfolding of the divine plans, and every fresh turn in the experience of

such a life is a further discovery of God, and all the various changes and chances of life but further disclosures of the Father's will as touching His child.

And as God has a distinct plan for every man, no man can fulfil that plan by copying another man's life. Every true life is unique, an original production of a thought of the Eternal. The life of the copyist, therefore, is faithless: he has no trust in his own significance: his life serves no end in the purposes of God, and so cannot fail of becoming dull, affected, untrue.

But though we acknowledge that we have a divine plan to carry out, how often do we shrink back from, or mar its execution by complaining of our lot—our birth, education, employment, infirmities, burthens, losses, wrongs? But, my brethren, let us remember that these, however they may have originated, whether directly from God, from ourselves, or others, they are now at all events essentially our lot, and to be accepted as such from our Father's hand: that even these limitations and hindrances are, if we meet them in the right spirit, the exact discipline we require, and form the very opportunities our faith needs, in order to mould our lives after the pattern there is of each in the mind of God. And, however circumscribed or obscure our lot may be, let it not be forgotten that in the life of a child of the Eternal no duties can be mean or trifling, unless we make them so by the spirit in which we discharge them.

Our life's work, moreover, will be ill done unless we address ourselves to it with the clear and serious conviction that God wants to have it done, and done by us. We must approach it with a strong sense of our predestination. We must have the assurance that "for this cause was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world." God, we must feel, has commissioned us and sent us forth to this spiritual task, which no one else can do, or at all events cannot do as well as we. God has therein need of us: has therein reckoned on our service, and therein deigned to call us His fellow-workers. Such belief in their predestination is in great measure the secret of the success of the world's reformers: it is a belief, moreover, that we can all rightly cherish, and if cherished with singleness of heart and devotion of spirit, it will endow us with a double portion of energy and enthusiasm in our life of service; and no service we render will be wanting in Christlike character when it issues from the loyally fulfilled conviction—"for this cause was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world." Every occupation in life fulfilled in this spirit becomes a divine education; for the meanest occupation which God has made necessary for man is as truly ordained to this end by God as the highest, and the artisan or the labourer is as truly called of God to his task as the poet, the prophet, or apostle.

And if there be any here who feel that they

have not found their life's task, though they have sought it carefully with tears, for them are written the words of consolation—

They also serve who only stand and wait ;

but while they stand in this waiting and expectant attitude for the voice of God, let them be ready to give themselves to the first good work that offers. And such will not have long to wait, if they are but content to follow the leadings of Providence and grasp the opportunities God places in their path ; for while the definite life-task still lingers in the distance, the day's labour is never far to seek, if the heart but truly longs to serve.

But let us examine how men act with regard to this Christian law of service. Now, manifestly, there are vast multitudes who ignore the Law of Christ, and, instead of seeking to serve, avowedly labour only to secure the services of others ; and seeing that these can be procured through wealth or power, they make haste to be rich. The goal desired is what is termed an independence—a position in which they look only to be ministered unto, not to minister. So far indeed as this merely selfish ambition is realised, it proves itself destructive of spiritual freedom, and becomes in reality an abandonment of the rightful obedience we owe both to God and man, in order to subject the whole life to the despotism of self. Thus we evade the divine necessities of service with which God girds us on every side, we fall into spiritual

bondage, whereas if we cheerfully accept and fulfil them, we are liberated from all authority less than the God who ordains them, and become no longer His servants but His sons, as we fulfil them from our hearts.

This craving for a material independence *as a means of release from the obligations of service* Christianity condemns as an unhallowed ambition, and declares that so far is the possession of wealth or rank from dispensing with these, that every increase of wealth or power or knowledge is only a further enlargement of the duty of service, and that no man in such loftier lot has a divine right to their continued possession save in so far as he makes them useful to those beside him in the lower, while his abuse of them disannuls in the reality of things the divine charter by which he holds them.

It is quite true indeed that in some way or other we cannot help serving others. Society is so bound together with mutual ties and services that a man cannot live a social life without making some return to society for all the service society renders to him. Thus the most confirmed self-seeker cannot help doing some good to his neighbour, yet because he does it blindly or selfishly, he precludes the spiritual benefit that would naturally result to himself. In everyday life we must give at all events the material value for what we get. But if we do this blindly or of necessity we not only sever ourselves from the spiritual

discipline of social life, but we also strip it, so far as we can, of all spiritual significance for our neighbour. Physical laws can only conduce to physical good, whereas the spiritual graces, that hallow common life and common things, can spring only from the spirits and wills of those who consciously and cheerfully are servants of God, and fellow-servants of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

And unless we have given ourselves to this service there is no real life here: there is no real life beyond the stars: we have no part amongst the heroic, the saintly, and the wise on earth: no share in the ministrations of the blessed in the world to come: he that saveth his life must lose it—but he that loseth his life for Christ's sake the same shall find it, everywhere and in a larger measure, throughout the wide universe of God.

VII

“Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.”—ST. MARK x. 43, 44 [R.V.].¹

II

IN our former sermon on this subject we dealt with the pagan ideal of greatness in the ancient world, and found that in contrast with the Christian, its essential characteristic was to rule, not to serve, to be ministered unto, not to minister. We saw, moreover, that this ancient pagan ideal still holds sway amongst men : that it makes its influence felt even in the heart of Christianity, and seeks to displace the Christian worship of goodness by a degrading idolatry of mere power. We next proceeded to examine this conception of greatness, and found that only those are truly great who contribute to the permanent welfare of humanity, and that no self-seeker and no work selfishly done have part in this grand task. Thus real greatness does not depend on largeness of faculty, but on the spirit in which the faculty is used ; not on great powers, but on the faithfulness of the

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, July 16, 1916.

service rendered with whatever powers a man is endowed. Hence, further, from this greatness none are excluded, however limited their capacities; and the law of Christian greatness is, that every endowment of faculty is likewise a requisition of duty, and the higher the gifts the wider the responsibilities, and men are great exactly in the measure of their service, and the greatest man is he that renders the widest service. "Whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all."

We showed, finally, how this law of service is practically ignored by great multitudes in the Christian Church, who either secretly or avowedly live for their own ends, and labour not to serve others but to be served by them.

This afternoon we shall treat of some practical developments in which the law of service issues, and deal with various imperfect fulfilments of it in our daily personal and social life.

I. And first of all we shall take up the class of those who acknowledge indeed the principle of service, but only in an imperfect degree, for when they come to fulfil its claims, it is not with their whole life that they fulfil them, but by some special form of service; and so they give themselves to certain good works, they set apart some portion of their time for such life of service, and so according to the age and its ideas they wash beggars' feet, give alms, visit the slums, or engage in some other special

form of religious work. Now, however good and self-denying as these often are, they may amount to a confession on our part that to live always to God and to man in God, to make life an unbroken service of Christ, is a standard of fellowship with Him to which we have never aspired in thought, much less won in actual life. Thus our lives come to be divided into two strongly contrasted parts—its sacred and its secular: its sacred side embracing the fragments of time which we devote to special acts of prayer or the service of others; and its secular composing the vast bulk of our time and pursuits, which lie without this limited boundary. Thus the life of necessary toil is regarded as gross and unspiritual, and religion is looked upon as a thing apart, which, finding expression only on isolated occasions and in special acts, serves to atone for the secular and ordinary life of man. But the man who esteems any part of his life secular or profane, has himself profaned it, and if any department of his life be wanting in sacredness, it is his own spirit that has wrought its desecration. If a man's religion cannot find expression in his daily life and daily toil, it can find it nowhere else, and must become henceforth to him a superstition or a snare.

This divorce of life from religion may be paralleled with the analogous divorce of life from morals, in men who profess to regulate their lives not by religious principles, but by moral precepts. In their business such men

are not unfrequently hard and unsympathetic, whereas in public life they often show themselves unselfish and open-handed: in making gain—greedy, covetous, and merciless in the maintenance of their rights; whereas, strange contrast, the money thus acquired they expend lavishly on great works of public beneficence or in relieving the distress occasioned in no slight degree by the inhumanity of their own business principles. But, my brethren, religion has no other field wherein to manifest itself than our daily life of home duties and business tasks. This is the service Christ requires us to render, and none other, and judgment shall be pronounced upon us, not according to our professions, not according to the length and multiplicity of our prayers or the largeness of our alms, but according to the faithfulness of our daily life, according to the degree in which God's Spirit has hallowed our hearts and moulded our lives and made our daily tasks part and parcel of an immortal's history. Our real religion is seen in our daily occupations: if these are permeated with the spirit of Christ-like service, they will prove, as they were designed, divine schools for the great employments of the life beyond the grave.

II. Again, imperfect service shows itself in the unrealities of our personal and social life, and arises from the want of an ever fresh spring of life within us, from the absence of that well of living water in our hearts springing up unto eternal life. We go through the forms and

details of life without knowing and feeling the spirit which alone can give them reality. All life has got its forms, but these forms rightly regarded are only the outward expression of some inward spiritual feeling or purpose, and so when these forms are tamely repeated and reproduced in the entire absence of the spirit, whose presence they professedly authenticate, they become degrading unrealities, oppressive formalisms.

In the religious life this unreality is also but too familiar, and the posture of worship means often nothing more than a mere muscular flexure of the body, and the devout demeanour betokens nothing beyond a reverent absent-mindedness. We are not borne through the details of our worship by an ever fresh spring of spiritual life within us; but outward law, convention, custom, dead as frost, lie heavy upon us—the haunting sense of what others expect from us, and the mere resolve to do what is right without the love or desire of doing it—all these forces mould our lives from without.

And this is no less true of our social life. There still more the burthen of lifeless habit and convention presses heavily upon us. We live not from fresh springs of feeling, not from the spirit which makes all things new, and awakes in the heart old in years a truer joyousness than that of youth; but we go through our social forms as though these were the ends of action, and so the grasp of the hand means

nothing, and the friendly greeting becomes but a mere convention, and the smile of welcome serves only to mask a real indifference of heart. And so we become dull and wearisome—dull to others, and wearisome even to ourselves. As a single illustration of our social unrealities let us take the society smile. Now, a real smile is the expression of an inward feeling, or emotion of gladness, which shows itself by throwing the features of the face into active movement—a movement from which they only gradually recover by the subsidence of the feeling which caused it; whereas a society smile expresses no feeling whatever, but is due solely to a flexure of the muscles, a mere change of the features of the face in obedience to the will, and vanishes immediately the will ceases to exert itself.

And thus, my brethren, our social life is not unfrequently a feelingless piece of conventionalism, and our worship a mere formalism. But such lives of elaborate make-believe can serve neither God nor man; for such service requires an ever fresh spring in the heart, the well of water within us, springing up unto eternal life. And this living, growing life of the spirit, and it alone, can give reality to our services Godward and make them the vestures of its own active obedience and reverence: can give reality to our social life and make its commonest details sacraments of its living emotions: and so the household smile, the daily morning greeting, the customary clasp of hand by hand

will be ever fresh and inspiriting ; for through these in very truth the spirit of a man goes forth and greets the spirit of his brother man.

But men may urge that this intense reality is impossible for them : their spirit is run dry, and they are not conscious of these fresh springs and promptings in their daily life. For such, that is, for us all in some measure, the path of duty is clearly defined. Obey such promptings of God's Spirit as you have, and they will grow in number and in strength, and in due time you will never lack them, and no task of daily service will find you without the appropriate motion of the Spirit to hallow and fill it with Its own reality.

But, struggle as we may, our life does at times suffer a spiritual drought and all our fresh springs seem parched. Then, however much inclination be lacking, we must constrain ourselves to the fulfilment of our duties. And what is this other than that, however weak and faint, we recognise and accept the task our God has set us, and resolutely enter on the path that He ordains, though it be with troubled heart and with reluctant feet ?

III. Again, our imperfect service of God and man arises from corruptness of motive. Men in glorifying God seek to glorify themselves, and so suffer the direction of their service to be determined not by what is most needed or imperative in the way of duty, but by what is most convenient or agreeable to themselves.

Whom are we most willing to serve? to

whom are we most gracious? on whom do we bestow our best pains? to whom do we give our choicest treasures of knowledge and experience? Is it to those who need us or to those who need us not? To those who can get on without us or those who cannot? and are not these derelictions on our part due to our ignoring the natural relations, through which should flow to our neighbours the life of God? But our service, if it is to be worthy of the name, can take no arbitrary direction: the direction is already prescribed by God. We exist in relations of family, kindred, neighbourhood, country, and are under distinct obligations of mutual service one to another. If a man provide not for such claims as these, he hath, as St. Paul declares, "denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." For we are all members of one Body, and in the relations that bind us together we can find, and nowhere else, the channels through which should flow not only our material and social, but also our spiritual help and service, to our fellow-men.

But even suppose we acknowledge our relations with others as determining the direction of our services, yet the corrupt motive is still able to get behind our actions, and there are men who have made great progress in Christian activity, who have frequently shown themselves superior to the love of gain, faithful in times of temptation, and yet have proved defective in temper, full of the sense of their own importance, self-

seeking, and ever studying to glorify God in such a way as shall best glorify themselves.

This self-regarding spirit makes true service all but impossible. It stirs up jealousies in families, leads to alienation among friends, and promotes distrust and conflict amongst those who should be working heartily together in the same honourable cause. The chief seat, the highest position,—this is what men are seeking, and seeking regardless of the injury they inflict on their fellow-workers, or the discredit they bring on the cause they profess to serve. A man conceives that he is not honoured as he should be in the religious organisation or public body with which he is connected, and he forthwith labours to create a schism in its ranks, or proceeds to attack its policy, though, previously to his personal mortification, he had felt the heartiest sympathy with its methods. Or again, another is promoted to the position or honour which he thought due to himself, and the bitterness with which he resents the supposed slight is undeniable evidence that, however complacently he had previously regarded himself, he was after all no better than a schemer for the chief seat at the feast. A man may indeed rightly long for an honourable position, but only for the sake of the larger field of service which such a position offers. But it is dangerous in any case to seek promotion through devotedness to a good cause. We must serve with a single eye, and every faculty that

declines such service and craves for itself a theatre for self-display, that cannot refrain from lawless exhibition of its powers, and keep silent in the background under indifference, provocation, or neglect, till such time as God bids it speak, is no minister of His will, but has exiled itself from His service and gone over with its proud gifts to the kingdom of outer darkness.

Faithful, single-eyed service is the only road to true greatness, and larger capacities and ampler opportunities for usefulness are the only reward it can rightly set before it. "Seekest thou great things for thyself," said the Prophet Jeremiah to Baruch, "seek them not." We must think and act and speak without ulterior prudential motives, and leave to the All-Wise to append to our efforts whatever influence He may deem fitting. And whensoever God gives the command, "Go forth from thy father's house and kindred to a land that I shall show thee," there is no man who in the face of prudent worldliness goes forth, like Abraham of old, leaving kindred and comfort and worldly honour, not knowing whither he goes, who does not receive manifold more even in this present time, and becomes a father of faithfulness for generations yet unborn. In every respect faith finds in its own experience that oracular saying of Cromwell verified—"One never mounts so high as when one knows not whither one is going."

Consider, moreover, the security and peace

of such a service. The man who is truly devoted thereto is a power which no might or malice of the enemy can harm or overcome. And just as the healthy body casts off the germs of disease that are continually seeking lodgment in it, so the healthy soul, while it keeps to the path of duty, goes with impunity through the iron furnace of temptation, through the pestilent regions of sin, through the asphyxiating atmosphere of self-complacent worldliness and aggressive unbelief. Truly in the highest degree is the promise of the Master fulfilled in His disciples, "Ye shall tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall in any wise hurt you."

Let us, my brethren, present a front of steel against the growing feeling of these days that service is not without an element of degradation, that obedience is an unmanly attitude of mind, and that if our self-will must vail perforce to circumstances, it is a distasteful experience that it is best wholly to ignore. The man who cherishes such a sentiment is a stranger indeed to the spirit of Christ; for he who is not able in the full majesty of his manhood to obey with open brow a Being or law higher than himself is barren of all faith, and is only drawing closer his chains by his struggles after a false freedom.

Moreover, the path of obedient service is likewise the path to empire over the hearts of men. Our Lord ruled men in the measure

of His service to them, and was their Master, as He proved Himself their servant, even unto death. And only he who has learnt to obey has qualified himself for command; for our sphere of command over men is at the same time the sphere of our own obedience to God, and if we are to wield such command aright, we must divest ourselves of arbitrariness and caprice, and offer ourselves as organs of the divine will, instruments in the hands of the Almighty. And command, when thus stripped of imperiousness and self-will, and worn in simple unconsciousness, will display in characters so clear its divine credentials as naturally and of course to beget obedience. On the other hand, he who, despite all the restraints of the subject state, still clings to his own perverse waywardness, can only find in command an opportunity for the more unrestrained indulgence of his self-will, and thereby provoke resistance and the spirit of revolt.

To all men at some time it comes to command, and some sphere is appointed to us wherein to rule, and here indeed the worth of a soul is readily determined; for the vices that were restrained in the subject condition can here find scope for more or less unfettered expression. How is it with us, my brethren, in our place of power among the children we train, the subordinates we control, the circle that bows to our influence? Do we take liberties with our spiritual prerogatives, and require the obedience of others as a homage to

ourselves, and not to the authority of God, of which we should be simply glad and willing channels? Do we grant to ourselves exemptions in the way of indolence and temper, and practise economy in matters of courtesy and love and truth? Then we can present no surer tokens of our base and unchristian conduct; for to every soul in touch with the spirit of Christ, the sphere of command is likewise the sphere of obedience, and "power is never felt as power save by those who abuse it." Or our unworthiness taking another direction, do we complain of the conditions by which our hands are tied, or crave for immunities from the obstacles that bar our path or thwart our advancement? Yet without faithfulness, and faithfulness just in respect of these difficulties, no beatitude of the Kingdom can be ours; for these difficulties, whether in the arduous life at home, or the strenuous life of danger or sudden death in the northern plains of France, are faith's divine opportunities: these limitations of an outward or inward necessity are the hands of the Eternal shaping our lot and leading us, if we are but faithful, to our Mount of Transfiguration. But the way thither lies through self-conquest and self-sacrifice: baptized with our Lord's baptism and drinking of His cup, we march as He did through suffering towards our perfectionment, and our lives become epics, full of stress and storm, unceasing warfare against high powers without and conquest of rebellious passions within—great epics, for

in an immortal's life there can be nothing mean or insignificant. But though self-sacrifice is the means whereby men enter the Kingdom, it is not the end for which they enter there. Christian self-sacrifice is only the sacrifice of the lower self, that our true selves as God's children may find full and untrammelled expression in the service of the Son of God. And this service becomes our perfect freedom, our deliverance from all authority less than His; and finally, owning no master save Christ alone, and determined, as He is, by the highest within us, He exalts us to His throne as we partake in His self-sacrifice, and makes us joint-rulers with Him of the eternal heavens, as we serve Him from our hearts.

VIII

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”—
COLOSSIANS iii. 1.¹

THE doctrine of the resurrection forms the chief theme of the teaching of the Apostles. Jewish unbelief and Greek rationalism were alike confronted with this truth; and whether it was St. Peter on the day of Pentecost before the motley multitude of many nations, or in the presence of the educated scepticism of the Sanhedrin, or St. Paul on his defence before Agrippa, or in his address on Mars Hill to the self-wise Athenians,—in each and all instances alike the key-note of Apostolic doctrine was, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”

But in our text St. Paul does not deal with Christ's resurrection in its relation to Christian belief but in its relation to Christian life. Mere intellectual assent to this or any other Christian truth has no saving efficacy whatever: there must be the Christian life, and as this life is the embodiment of Christian truth it is the best of all Christian creeds.

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, Easter Sunday, 1916.

Life and doctrine are really inseparable. The doctrine can only be understood in the light of Christian life, and the spiritual truth of this life finds its objective reality—its confirmation—in the life of Christ and the life of the Christian community.

This life in Christ is a new creation and no fiction of fancy or of enthusiasm, it is in a real sense a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, though both these facts are only partially realised at the outset, and do not and in fact cannot at once affect the entire life. That is a work which requires faith and constancy and time.

Since the new life is a growth and often a very slow growth, the difference to the outward observer between the old life and the new may be hardly perceptible. And yet as to inward principle the two lives are poles asunder: the old life is in the main centred on self, it is spent in the effort to achieve the things within its own narrow horizons, while the new life aims at doing God's will in ever more adequate though always imperfect efforts.

Though it is true that a man living the selfish and self-centred life may at times burst the barriers of selfhood in an occasional act of heroism or self-sacrifice, as has been proved thousands of times in the present war as well as in the less stirring times of peace, yet he cannot march steadily onward in the spirit of sustained self-sacrifice, unless he has in some degree truly surrendered himself to the

new life. For to the maintenance of this spirit of sustained self-sacrifice the new life alone is adequate—at first only potentially and partially but ultimately in its fulness and completeness.

In the old life the man regards self and its satisfactions and ambitions as the only things worth living for: hence his aim is to secure pleasure or success, or high place, or wealth, or reputation, or it may be a mere subsistence, and for the sake of these he is ready sooner or later to barter honour, purity, truth, duty, love—all that is best and holiest in life.

In the new or risen life, on the other hand, the man is learning—and the lesson is one which he understands more deeply every day—that the self he carries within his own bosom is his own worst foe—that he has no adversary so dangerous in all the universe, and that he must through Christ's help daily overcome this old Adam within him that he may become a new man in Christ: and as he makes progress in this new life he comes to feel more and more that he can purchase no earthly blessing, however great, at the cost of a single moment's conscious and deliberate unfaithfulness, and he finds in ever increasing measure that God's loving-kindness is better than life itself, and that God's service is its own reward. And if through inadvertence, or a momentary burst of passion, or through some sudden or unforeseen temptation, he is betrayed into forgetfulness of the Lord who has redeemed him, when the full meaning of his faithlessness has dawned

upon him, he has no rest or calm or peace, till he is again restored to that Presence from which his sin—his own grievous sin—has exiled him. And so, as he wins upward in the spiritual life, he shrinks not from travelling the path of sorrows, the way his King has already trod: he withholds not from fellowship in the passion of his Lord, for he cannot suffer himself to be a delicate member of that body, whose head was crowned with thorns.

Thus the risen life, the life of Christian utterance, begins in self-sacrifice, and all genuine nobility of character springs therefrom: whether it be the meekness of endurance, the quiet unobtrusiveness of womanly self-forgetfulness, the heroism of manly action, the courage of martyrdom, all these are the manifold fruits and tokens of the risen life.

But self-sacrifice is not the end of Christ's life and teaching, it is only the means for attaining its end—the sacrifice of the lower self within us that the higher and diviner self may find full and unhampered utterance and expression.

Christ has come not that we may have a thin, dwarfed, narrow existence, but that we may have life, and have it more abundantly—life full of manly, pure, lofty, noble interests, life rich in truth and love, in strength and tenderness, heroism and patient endurance.

All true life is a completing and repetition of the life and sacrifice of Christ: for though in one sense the sacrifice of Christ is complete

and finished, yet in another it will not be finished so long as there remains one heart that bows not to the Christlike Spirit, and bears not the cross the Saviour of men hath borne. "Fill up that which is behindhand of the sufferings of Christ," saith St. Paul. "The passion of Christ is not the substitute for our obedience but the source of it." Christ has died that we too may die, die to our old life, die to sin : Christ has risen that we too may rise and live unto righteousness. Christ therefore has not, as some have represented it, done everything that we may do nothing ; but rather Christ has done all things that we through Him may do all things likewise, or as St. Paul puts it, "that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."

Death unto sin as well as life unto righteousness are in practice things of growth. If indeed we have been striving to die with our Master and rise to the new life, each season of the Church as it rolls by should witness some fresh conquest of ours, should see us dead to some sin that once had dominion over us, and risen in proportion to the higher life in Christ, and each victory, further, over self will be an earnest of the final consummation of holiness within us.

The risen life, therefore, cannot be one of slumbering virtue, of negative purity and inglorious ease : nay, it is a life of ceaseless aspiration—ever forgetting the things that are behind,

ever reaching forward to the things that are before. Hence it cannot be content merely with the observance of certain religious usages or the practice of certain duties, however good they may be. The good habits we have in the present are indeed the fruit of self-conquest, of earnest struggles in the past, are evidences that we were in earnest in that past, but they are no proofs that we are spiritually living in the present: habits that were formed only through earnest spiritual effort in the past tend to become mechanical through repetition, and do practically become so. If our Christian life is composed merely of such good habits, it may be all but dead, and the soul may be swept and garnished but empty; for habits once formed call for no fresh spiritual effort in their exercise, no strong wrestling of the soul with its temptations. Hence, if such is the nature of our religion, we may stand exactly before God as the Pharisee in the parable, who possessed the most unexceptionable habits. Accordingly we cannot rest content with a religion of the customary and convenient: we must ever be aspiring to do better to-day what we did well yesterday. We must be spiritually growing else we are spiritually dying.

We are all too prone to rest on our feelings, our religious experiences in the past, instead of acting in the living realities of the present. If, indeed, any one of the great truths of the Christian Faith has grown dim, and lost its

former fulness of meaning for us, and we desire to restore it to all its vitality and power of aforetime, all we have got to do is, as Coleridge pointed out, to translate it into action, to carry it out in practice. Do a single act of pure self-sacrifice, maintain the cause of right and justice at whatever cost of personal comfort and convenience, cultivate the spirit of forgivingness towards some one who has wronged you, be truthful and pure at whatever loss of worldly interest and pleasure, and these acts will be your best teachers of God and the risen life; for not the hearers of the word, nor yet those who have a pleasure in hearing it, but the doers thereof are blessed before God.

If, therefore, we were raised together with Christ, let our risen life manifest itself in our ceaseless quest after the things that are above: Are we indeed seeking the things that are above in our conversation? Does our presence call out the good in those around us, or does it evoke the bad? Does it check the uncharitable, the impure, the slanderous tongue, or does it encourage its hateful activities? Are we possessed of a goodness that, magnet-like, attracts to it the kindred goodness in those who call us friend: or does our influence rouse the sleeping vices of other natures and draw towards us the wickedness that lurks in other hearts? Here we have a ready and easy test as to the reality of the Christlike life within us: goodness attracts and works towards goodness, and evil attracts and works towards evil.

Are we seeking the things that are above in our business life? Do we scorn to take an unfair advantage, to keep back the truth, or to turn another's difficulties to our own account? Are we finding the daily God-appointed duties in the office, the shop, the study, the blessed swarm of household tasks, a school for Christian virtues as God purposed they should be? Are we learning therefrom increasing self-control, a sense of justice, humility, truth, compassion, helpfulness, strength? Does the uprightness of our life therein so shine before men that they seeing our good works are led in like manner to glorify God? Whatever be the religion we profess, it is our daily life that determines our real religion.

But it has been contended at many ages of the Church's history, but never so bitterly as in recent years, that Christianity does not cover the whole field of human life, and that the State, not to speak of other forms of human activity, holds unrivalled claims to man's allegiance within its own sphere. But this is not true of Christianity rightly conceived.

The aim of the Christian faith is to embrace the entire life of man. Nothing must remain outside its scope. Now in the absence of a faith embracing the entire life, partial faiths, limited enthusiasms, do, it is true, serve to rescue life in some degree from its self-centred barrenness and contempt, and to furnish it with some motive for existence. The heart that is open to some partial truth, which is

surrendered to some pursuit however trifling, provided that it is harmless, is thereby saved from a total loss of self-respect and absolute sterility. In an infinitely higher degree is this true of those who offer a life's devotion to science, art, or wisdom, and are through their surrender thereto lifted in their limited province into heights of self-denial that all but rival Christian self-sacrifice. Or again, if the heart give itself, not to such aims as these but to a human object—to a father's love, a mother's self-forgetfulness—to generous toil for others, to a true and chivalrous patriotism, then it too is in large measure redeemed from the curse of a self-centred existence, and is open to the fulness of a larger life and truth.

But none of these limited surrenders of ourselves open our life to the highest goodness and truth. They are all indeed in some measure salutary; but, being limited in their influence, they fail of lifting the entire life; for the father that is loving and true in his home life may be false and harsh in his business relations: the devoted patriot may be a treacherous friend or neighbour: the artist and the scientist may be the victims of excess or profligacy. The faith that is to save us must embrace every province of the human life—in its individual, national, and international aspects—in other words, a province co-extensive with human life, its varied activities, its highest aspirations. And this is exactly the province that is claimed by the Christian faith; and when through Christ we

have risen to this faith, when it has become paramount within us, it shapes our life in its greatest issues and its least: it transfigures art and music, science and philosophy, every passion of the human heart, every form of human talent, every glory of human genius, every longing of the human spirit, and makes them one and all handmaids of the Most High.

The lifting up, therefore, of man's thoughts, life, and aspirations Godward is the purpose of Christ's life and resurrection, and mindful thereof, the Church has ever throughout the ages, alike in the upper room, in the cloister, in the village church, in the vast cathedral, stirred its children to the thoughts of the higher life with the words of sacred challenge *sursum corda*, "Lift up your hearts": and whether it be that these words come home to us amid peace or war, in the joys or sorrows of life, its changes and its chances, whether it be in the crowded mart, or the lonely hillside, in the closet, or in the thronged aisles of church or minster, may there be returned from our hearts the glad response, "We lift them up unto the Lord."

IX

“Then answered all the people, and said : His blood be on us, and on our children.”—ST. MATT. xxvii. 25.¹

SUCH were the awful words of imprecation wherewith a whole people proclaimed its apostasy from the kingdom of justice and truth. And yet, strictly regarded, these words are but the outward expression of the spirit of this world ; for the spirit, which arrayed against Christ all the actors on that world tragedy, is never without its parallel in any nation or in any age. The characteristic virtues of modern and ancient politics—such as prudence, sagacity, subtlety, far-sightedness—have always, when in the counsels of a nation they have disowned their due subordination to truth and righteousness, proved the rock on which its prosperity has split, and prepared the way for its annihilation.

It is the indelible shame of Christians that after Christianity has been at work for nineteen centuries it is still the accepted belief that, though the precepts of Christ are binding on individual Christians, they are not binding on

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, Good Friday, 1917.

the relations of community with community or nation with nation. Thus, though no right-minded man could stand passively by, while a bully was outraging a weaker neighbour, yet a strong nation,¹ professedly Christian, could, till Monday last, proclaim to all the world that, so long as its own citizens and its own material gains suffered no hurt, there was no ground for its intervention; however terribly the weaker nationalities were—to use the Old Testament words—devoured, broken in pieces, and the residue trodden underfoot. Thanks be unto God that the United States has at last abandoned this heathen conception of the relations of one nation to another, and announced its conversion through the lips of its President.

This spirit of the world—of selfishness and self-seeking—takes refuge under many a specious name, such as patriotism, public zeal, and loyalty. These are virtues in their right place, but, if ever the State claims the obedience that is due to God only, as it has done in Germany, where the nation as a whole has bowed down to Satan on his promise to grant them all the kingdoms of the world, then it becomes a temporary impersonation of the Antichrist, and the nation that renders such obedience has gone over for the time being, with all its proud gifts, to the kingdom of outer darkness.

¹ I leave these words standing as they were delivered. They represent the feeling that prevailed through Great Britain previous to that date. That a strong minority in the United States, composed of nearly all its foremost men, resented bitterly the neutral attitude of their country was of course well known everywhere.

Now, it was just this worldly self-seeking spirit which, coming forward in the guise of patriotism, moved alike Christ's accusers and Christ's judges, and which finally found expression in the awful cry—His blood be upon us and upon our children.

The form which the spirit of worldliness took among the Jews was noble in appearance. It was not the greed of gain, the craving for ease and quiet and comfort, it was not the mere lust of conquest, but an insatiable passion for national freedom, an unquenchable longing for that time when Israel should be paramount among the nations, and for a Messiah, who should come as a triumphant conqueror to make Jerusalem the capital of a regenerated world—the world of Jewish *Kultur*.

Such was the ostensible ground for their opposition to Christ and His teaching: but the real ground for their opposition was their spiritual unlikeness to Him, and their inability to accept His claims unless they surrendered their own pretensions to be the one chosen race and the only right inheritors of the world. Hence with their worldly aims and their worldly ideals they could not receive the Galilean, who had shown Himself to be the foe of the orthodox Judaism of the day, the friend of the publican and sinner, the associate of the outcast, and who had proclaimed to these religious worldlings and worldly religionists that God's kingdom is not a kingdom of this world, that it comes not by worldly policy

or force or fraud, but by humility and obedience and the fulfilment of God's will on earth. Thereupon the insulted spirit of the world rose against Christ—the insulted votaries of the worship of force and guile, of arrogance and self-assertion—and assailed Him with all the envy and malice of an inventive hatred. They called Him a scoffer and an infidel; they denounced Him as a demoniac. Even the multitudes who had at first flocked around Christ with a passion of admiration and enthusiasm at last turned against Him. So long as discipleship involved no loss or discomfort, they were ready to follow Him: but when it entailed disadvantage and shame, they turned with the turning tide and swelled the tumult of those who afterwards cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

At last Christ is arraigned before the judgment-seat of Annas. Annas, indeed, though called the High Priest, had not held that office since his deposition by the Romans twenty years before. He was, however, a man of great personal influence, and his high dignity, his political connections, and advanced years gave great weight to his unofficial decision. At his tribunal, however, Christ could expect no justice. In his worldly prudence, foreseeing that this Prophet's success must issue in the downfall of his house, Annas was prepared to exert all his influence to crush and destroy Him. Notwithstanding, all his inquisition proved unavailing to show aught

to the discredit of the Accused, and so Christ was sent bound to Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, who was High Priest that year. Caiaphas, like his father-in-law, was cruel, unprincipled, and sceptical; it was he, so St. John remarks, who had before urged in the Jewish council the judicial murder of Christ on the ground of political expediency—"It was expedient that one man should die for the people," rather than that the whole nation should perish. Truth and righteousness could form no elements in the decision of a tribunal whose aim was not to establish justice, but to consult expediency and self-interest; and so, at last, our Lord is handed over to Pilate, the Roman Governor, with the request that He should be executed.

Pilate was the most impartial of our Lord's judges, and strove with all the pity of which he was capable to deliver Christ from the hands of His unprincipled accusers. His insight into human character made it clear to him that Jesus was wholly innocent—a conviction which he expressed in the words, "I find in Him no fault at all." This sentence of acquittal only embittered the fury of Christ's enemies, and Pilate, catching amid the tumult the name of Galilee as the scene of Christ's ministry, gladly seized the opportunity of getting rid of an embarrassing prisoner, and of devolving on another the responsibility of judgment. Jesus was a Galilean, and so belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod. To Herod, therefore, Jesus

was now sent. Of all the judges before whom our Lord appeared Herod was the most despicable. He was covetous, dissipated, credulous, and superstitious—the murderer of John the Baptist, the paramour of his brother's wife. He possessed no trait of character calling for respect. It was to him that our Lord applied the only expression of sheer contempt He ever used when He said, "Go tell that fox." And so when Christ appeared before him the only feeling that moved the Tetrarch was one of vulgar curiosity, a hope that his superstitious wonder would be gratified by a display of miracle. But in vain did Herod ply him with questions. He met them all with a dignified silence. At length the coarse savagery of the man burst all bounds and wreaked itself in scoffs and jests on the unoffending Sufferer, and so once more and finally Christ was sent back to the Praetorium.

Again our Lord stands before Pilate, and again the responsibility of decision is thrust on the reluctant Governor. Now was the time for Pilate to act conformably with his convictions, to vindicate the impartiality and grandeur of Roman justice and set the Innocent free. But it was just here that Pilate stopped short: he dreaded an insurrection; he was afraid that a fresh rebellion would bring about his immediate recall to Rome. His past acts, moreover, would not bear examination: the Samaritans he had massacred, the Jews that had been assassinated by his orders, the Galileans whose

blood he had mingled with their sacrifices—all these past cruelties and crimes rose before him and paralysed his awakening conscience, and made it impossible for him any longer to listen to the voice of mercy or obey the dictates of justice. And yet he could not wholly cast behind him the noble tradition of justice for which Rome had stood in the past, and so, despite his fears, he laboured long and earnestly to save Jesus, resorting to one expedient after another, and only gave way when the mob menaced him with the anger of his imperial master—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend." This Caesar was the brooding and jealous Tiberius, and such an accusation as this was sure to work on the suspicious mind of the tyrant. Such a peril Pilate had not the courage to face. His evil actions in the past had robbed him of the power of acting with disinterested rectitude in the present, and so he sacrificed the last promptings of compassion and justice to the pleadings of fear and self-love. His conscience, however, was not yet wholly silenced, and so to stifle its remonstrances he went through the idle form of washing his hands before the multitude—"I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." To these words of Pilate there came thundering back a deep hoarse cry from the entire multitude—the most awful in all the records of human history—"His blood be on us and on our children."

Alas for the self-wise and the votaries of

this world's wisdom : " God taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Almost before the crucifixion was completed, Judas, who with a view to gain and advancement had betrayed his Master, died a wretched suicide : within a year Caiaphas, who had lied and intrigued and bartered justice for pelf and place, was removed from the high priesthood : within three or more years Herod was stripped of his tetrarchy and ended his life in exile at the northern base of the Pyrenees in Gaul. Within the same period Pilate, who had surrendered his sense of justice and his conscience to retain his governorship, was recalled to Rome on charges of oppression, and according to some accounts died an exile and a suicide. Not more than a generation after the tragedy on Calvary the house of Annas was razed to the ground and his son dragged through the streets of Jerusalem and murdered. The Sadducees, who despite their ecclesiastical calling had come in the main to be mere political adventurers and opportunists, saw all that they had given their souls for overthrown in the triumph of Titus : while the Pharisees, who from their desire to destroy Christ had formed a temporary alliance with the Sadducees, lived to see the last hope of a world kingdom of Israel expire in the extinction of national freedom and the destruction of their temple and city.

And, as for the humbler agents in the crucifixion of Christ, over thirty years later they were slain in myriads, and according to their

own historian Josephus, Jerusalem was deluged with the blood of over 1,000,000 of its children. And from century to century in this land and in that the burthen of blood seems still to press heavily on them and on their children.

We have thus seen in the case of all the actors in the tragedy on Calvary the outcome of the policy of pure expediency, and that the natural development of such a policy issues, when confronted with higher claims, in such a cry as was sent up of old : " His blood be on us and on our children."

The incidents of Good Friday, which have been briefly sketched, carry with them their own lesson alike to the individual and to the nation.

As regards the individual so far as his life moves wholly on the plane of this world and is fashioned by what is merely politic and expedient, he no less than the Jews of old is " crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame." It is not necessary to be a gross offender in order to be one of the multitude of crucifiers never wanting in any age or any nation. There is an essential kinship between all kinds of wickedness and sin, whether these sins mask themselves under the refinements of modern life and religion, or openly proclaim their defiance of the kingdom of God and its righteousness. If, then, this Good Friday morning, we are consciously nursing feelings of envy or malice or hatred to our neighbour, if we are cherishing unforgivingness in our

hearts, if we are deliberately practising deceit, or are yielding ourselves to impurity of thought or life, if we are worshipping wealth or power or social distinctions, or through sloth or self-indulgence are indifferent to definite claims of duty and righteousness, then in us too, this morning, there is reigning the spirit that dominated Annas and Caiaphas and the Jewish masses, and our life and actions are, whether we will or no, joining in the cry, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Once more the words of our text are applicable to us in the present day as a nation. If the sins of the individual serve to crucify Christ afresh and draw down upon him the judgment that inevitably follows, this is true far more manifestly in the case of the nation. For the individual may die before the day of reckoning, and appear in the eyes of man to have escaped retribution, but this is never so in respect of the nation. Sooner or later the nation must, and in this world, pay unto the uttermost farthing the penalties of its wrong-doings. We might take the present war as an example in point. Not to speak of the penalties we have righteously incurred by our slackness, materialism, our lack of foresight and insight, our moral shortcomings in the past, we might single out from the host of these the political covenant we broke some sixty years ago. In the London Convention of 1852 — we undertook in conjunction with France, Prussia, and Austria to guarantee the integrity of the Kingdom of

Denmark. When twelve years later Prussia, backed by Austria and acting with its habitual and cynical disregard of its plighted faith, attacked Denmark and robbed it of Schleswig-Holstein, England, France, and other guarantors of the integrity of Denmark talked a great deal, but did nothing more, though they had solemnly promised to defend the rights of Denmark. In this gross dereliction of duty our guilt was great, though far less than that of the false and perfidious German powers who attacked the country they had promised to protect. None the less the penalty we are paying could hardly have been greater. If in 1864 we had resolutely undertaken the defence of Denmark, we could have maintained its integrity. If on that occasion and all other subsequent crises we had simply taken the line of duty and not the line of least resistance, there would have been now no Kiel Canal through Holstein, no powerful German fleet, no submarine menace, no anti-Christian league threatening the freedom and the existence of all the nations of the world, and no loss of human life, rising to millions of English and French and other nationalities. Truly the blood of the few hundred or thousand Danes who fell in a hopeless defence of their country has come upon us and upon our children. And yet our rulers, our diplomatists, our political opportunists and pacifists, and the vast majority of English folk in 1864, from the Queen on the throne to the man in the street, were no doubt

congratulating themselves that they had escaped the losses that such a war would have involved, not considering that they had by their falsehood dishonoured the fair fame of England and led the perjured German powers to believe that England was in this respect no better than themselves, and would never henceforth endanger its comfort or gain or prosperity for the sake of any covenant, however binding, or any duty, however sacred. Instead of deploring this present war of judgment, we should be thankful to God that it has come upon us before it was too late, as it was in the case of the Jews. Our nation had been long pursuing the primrose path it entered in 1864. It had sown the wind and it was already reaping the whirlwind. It was menaced with a chaos of conflicting classes and interests. Employers and employed, capital and labour—each in turn alleging the other to be faithless to their solemn covenants—were preparing for a conflict *à l'outrance*. Politicians had to a considerable degree become purblind, mere time-servers, place-hunters, opportunists. The body politic was full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and for these there was no help in man. At last, when the final hour seemed to have all but struck, God's judgment came upon us, and then, thank God, England arose and, recognising the day of its visitation at God's hands, offered and still offers all that it holds most precious and dear, that God's righteousness and truth and purity may again

be established on earth. But when the present war has happily closed England has to enter on a still greater within its own borders, in order that individual purity of life may be achieved, that the demon of drunkenness may be driven forth from our land, that truth may be established as binding between man and man and between class and class : and to bear our part in this greater warfare we are all summoned by God, and in answer to this divine summons may we individually and as a nation reply in the spirit of Blake :

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

X

"But some one will say, How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain . . . but God giveth it a body. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."—I COR. xv. 35-44.

"For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven. If so that being clothed we shall not be found naked."—2 COR. v. 1-3.¹

THIS afternoon I propose to set forth briefly the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of man, especially as it is given in the Pauline Epistles.

The treatment of such a theme is far from unnecessary, as no doctrine has been so much misunderstood—since the second century of the Christian era down to the present—as that of man's resurrection. And yet there are few doctrines so definitely stated as that of the resurrection in the words I have just read. This doctrine, which distinguishes most

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey on Sunday, April 22, 1917.

carefully between the present body and the spiritual body, is presupposed also in most of the references that are made to the future life in the Book of Revelation. This teaching stood out in strong contrast with the popular teaching of Judaism; for, according to the Talmud and other Jewish writings, the resurrection was generally conceived to be a restoration pure and simple of the present body, or some portion of it, by the reunion of the material elements of which it was composed at death. It was thus mainly a resuscitation of the flesh, not in any sense a resurrection in the New Testament sense of the word. And yet many of the most prominent of the early fathers of the Church taught a resuscitation of the self-same body that the spirit had left at death. This materialistic doctrine is found in all the original forms of the Apostles' Creed, which down to the sixteenth century read: "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh" (*carnis resurrectionem*, *σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν*)—a statement in direct conflict with the New Testament: "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God."

About the middle of the sixteenth century this clause was changed into: "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Amongst the early fathers who forced this gross materialism on the Church might be mentioned Tertullian, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Jerome. Jerome developed this view to extreme lengths, and maintained the absolute identity of the

resuscitated body and the present body—even down to the hair and teeth. The hair of the head will be raised; for “the hairs of your head are all numbered”! The teeth will be raised; for the Scripture teaches “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”!

But, however extravagant and unscriptural this view of Jerome is, it is not to be compared for ineptitude with a very popular hymn on this subject in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The hymn in question is:

On the resurrection morning
Soul and body meet again;
No more sorrow, no more weeping,
No more pain.

Here all that is wrong is the implication that it is the same material body that is united to the soul, an implication that is verified in the verses that follow, which are:

Here awhile they must be parted,
And the flesh its Sabbath keep,
Waiting in a holy stillness,
Wrapped in sleep.

For awhile the tired body
Lies with feet towards the morn;
Till the last and brightest Easter
Day is born.

Soul and body reunited,
Thenceforth nothing shall divide,
Waking up in Christ's own likeness,
Satisfied.

For sheer imbecility this view of the resurrection is, so far as I am aware, without

a parallel. Here we are told that the body that is to be reunited with the spirit is the flesh. Now, as I have already pointed out, the New Testament teaches clearly that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Thus the doctrine is bad. But the writer goes further and says that the tired body keeps Sabbath with its feet pointing to the East, and preserves a sort of consciousness; for, while the soul apart from it is engaged in contemplation, it is sleeping. What sort of sleep can the rotting flesh enjoy? How can it wait in holy stillness, seeing it is the inevitable prey of worms and corruption? This hymn is thus a medley of false doctrine and unmitigated nonsense. The belief that the material body would be raised again was an ancient heathen doctrine, and led to the embalmment of the body and the building of the pyramids. It made its way into Judaism, but it has neither part nor lot in Christianity.

But this doctrine of the resuscitation of the material body which is unscriptural is also unscientific, and its unscientific character cannot survive the spread of thought and knowledge. Most people now are aware that the matter of our bodies is constantly changing; that of all the material particles of which our bodies were composed seven years ago not a single one remains: all have been replaced, and the change is going on from moment to moment. If this ceaseless change were

absolutely arrested for a moment, physical death would set in immediately. By some mysterious process we are gathering to ourselves new material and discarding the old. And yet, amid all these changes we are the same persons. There is something fixed which gives form and shape and organisation to this ever-flowing current of matter, which is momentarily condensed into what we call our bodies. Now, this something, St. Paul teaches, is the spirit of man, which, when freed from the body, forms a fresh body for itself adapted to the spiritual kingdom it has entered; or rather, even in this life it has partly or wholly fashioned that spiritual body. As the spirit has formed for itself a body fitted for its needs in this material world, so it can build itself a body such as its new surroundings in the spiritual kingdom require.

Such being in brief St. Paul's teaching on this question, let us proceed to examine his words more exactly. In xv. 22 he states the general law, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"; that is, "as all who are spiritually in fellowship with Adam die, so all who are spiritually in fellowship with Christ shall be made alive." But to that doctrine of the resurrection certain objections were evidently raised by the Corinthians, and so we read: "But some one will say, How are the dead raised; and with what body do they come?" Thereto the apostle rejoins: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not

quicken except it die." That is, a man's own experience should instruct him therein; for it overturns the objection that is raised. The death of the seed consists in the decomposition of its material wrapping. By this process the living principle within it is set free, and seizes hold of the matter that is around it, wherewith it forms for itself a new body. In like manner the apostle teaches that the resurrection is effected through death itself. What appears as the insurmountable obstacle is itself a necessary means. The spirit of man must free itself from the corruptible body which contains it before it receives its new and incorruptible body.

Having thus answered the first question, the apostle now addresses himself to the second, as to the nature of the resurrection body: "With what body do they come?" That is, what is the nature of the resurrection body? This body, so far from being the former body resuscitated, will have, he declares, characteristics of quite an opposite kind. Thus he writes (xv. 41-44): "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a psychical (*i.e.* soulish) body; it is raised a spiritual body." You will observe that I have translated St. Paul's words by "psychical body," and not by the inadequate phrase "natural body," as in our English Bible. The psychical body is simply a body that is a

suitable organ for the psyche or soul¹ in this material world, just as the spiritual body is a body that is a suitable organ for the spirit in the spiritual world. St. Paul employs the word "soul" in this connection in a depreciatory sense. He uses it quite differently from the other writers of the New Testament. Only once,² and that in his earliest Epistle, where he expresses himself in merely popular language, does he speak of the salvation of the soul. Where other writers speak of the soul as the chief element in man, St. Paul speaks of the spirit.

Let us now return to the words: "It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption." The words "it is sown" are understood by nearly ninety-nine persons out of one hundred who hear this chapter read at the Burial Service as referring to the mere burial of the body in the grave. But such an interpretation is absolutely wrong. For the Greek word *σπείρειν* never means "to bury." You sow a living thing ; you bury a dead thing. The phrase "to sow" here is a technical term in Jewish literature, and means "to sow the spirit of man on the earth," that is, to place the spirit of man in a material environment here on earth, so that it may fashion for itself a body, adapted so far as possible for its expression, out of the

¹ That it is not an adequate organ of the spirit is to be concluded from its very designation—"a soulish body."

² 1 Thess. v. 23. The soul, according to the Pauline conception, is simply the vital principle of the flesh. The epithets "fleshly" and "soulish" (1 Cor. iii. 3, xv. 44, 46) are accordingly practically synonymous.

materials around it, just as a seed of corn gathers to itself a body from the material earth around it. Thus the entire life of man in this world—from its first appearance to the obsequies that attest its departure—corresponds to the sowing of the seed in the earth. Only a few great scholars in the past recognised that this was the meaning of the text, being guided thereto by the sense of the passage. All the more credit, therefore, is due to their insight, since they were not aware that in Jewish Apocalyptic this is the technical meaning of this word in this connection.¹ That this is the apostle's meaning will become clearer if we consider the opposing members in the various contrasts drawn in xv. 42-44. First "it (that is, 'the spirit') is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." Now we might paraphrase these words and thereby explain their meaning. Thus it "is sown in corruption" means the spirit is sown in a body of flesh and blood. In verse 50 of this very chapter "flesh and blood" are taken to be synonymous with "corruption"; "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Or, again, we might compare Rom. viii. 21, where our present life on earth is said to be in "the bondage of corruption." In the current Jewish literature of that time the whole earthly

¹ Cf. 4 Ezra viii. 41. *Sicut enim agricola serit super terram semina multa . . . sic et qui in saeculo seminati sunt non omnes salvabuntur; v. 48, qui seminati sunt super eam (i.e. terram).*

life was defined as the sphere of corruption.¹ Hence we conclude that the words "it is sown in corruption" refer to the entire life of man in this world, which is called by the apostle and his contemporaries the world of corruption.

Next, the phrase "in dishonour" refers to the body we bear in our present low estate, which St. Paul elsewhere terms "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. iii. 21), which body is to be changed into the form of the body of Christ's glory. Next, "weakness" is another apt description of the body as an instrument of the spirit; "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," but to apply such a term to the dead body would be absurd. Finally, the present body is psychical; that is, it is an organ of the lower side of man's being, that is, his soul, whereas the spiritual body is an organ of the spirit.

Thus, whereas the psychical body is corruptible and clothed with humiliation and weakness, the spiritual body will enjoy incorruptibility, glory, and power. Hence between the two bodies there is no exact continuity. Our full possession of the one depends on the death of the other. And yet there is an essential likeness between them. This likeness proceeds from the fact that they are successive expressions of the same personality though in different spheres. It is the same individual vital principle that organises both.

¹ See 2 Bar. xxi. 19; xxxi. 5; xliv. 9, 12; lxxxv. 5; 4 Ezra vii. 113.

From this description of the resurrection body it follows that only the righteous can share in the resurrection. Since the faithless lose their psychical body at death, and since, so long as they remain faithless in the after-life, they cannot possess a spiritual body, they are necessarily conceived as "naked," that is, as disembodied spirits.

We now pass on naturally to a very brief treatment of this subject in 2 Cor. v. 1-3, where the spiritual body is described: "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven. 3. If so be that we shall be clothed (that is, put on our heavenly body) and not be found naked."

I will draw your attention here only to two points. The first is the time when we come into possession of the spiritual body; the second is to the condition of the faithless as disembodied spirits. As regards the time our text is clear. It states: When the earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved—that is, when the body dies—we come into possession of an immortal spiritual body. Thus the resurrection of the righteous follows immediately on death, and not at some indefinite period in the far distant future. As regards the second point, our text states more clearly what we necessarily concluded from 1 Cor. xv.,

that, whilst the faithful receive a spiritual body, the faithless do not—they become disembodied spirits.

The same doctrine as to the spiritual body is to be found in Revelation, where white robes, that is, spiritual bodies, are given to the souls under the altar in heaven, and the blessed are repeatedly spoken of as clothed in the bright glory of such spiritual bodies, whereas the faithless are described as “naked.” “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked, and they see his shame”; or, again: “I counsel thee to buy of me . . . white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest”; “He that overcometh shall be arrayed in white garments.” Here we observe that we have the same teaching as in St. Paul with regard to the condition of the faithless; they are naked, disembodied beings; shut up within the limits of their respective personalities and denied the power of outward expression; for just as the material body is the organ whereby the spirit expresses itself in this material world, so the spiritual body is the organ whereby the spirit expresses itself in the world to come. But the faithless have no such body.

The teaching of the Book of Revelation on this question might be shortly stated as follows: The present life of faith has within it the promise and the potency of a blessed im-

mortality of the soul¹ endowed with an organism which this author symbolises by the terms "garments," "raiment." This organism is adapted to its spiritual environment. Every true Christian has potentially and actually this spiritual body which he can defile (iii. 4), or cleanse (vii. 14, xxii. 14) and make white (vii. 14), or destroy wholly (iii. 18, xvi. 15) and so render himself a "naked" soul. Every act of the present life is thus linked up inexorably with the future. Moreover, while it is true on the one hand that God bestows on us the spiritual body (iii. 18, vi. 11), it is equally true on the other that we have our share in the creation of this body (iii. 4, xvi. 15) through the fellowship of our spirit with that of Christ. On the other hand, we can destroy alike its possibilities and itself by unfaithfulness to Christ (iii. 18, xvi. 15).

In conclusion it may be asked: How does this doctrine that the faithful receive their spiritual bodies immediately after death agree with the doctrine of the General Resurrection? These two elements of the faith are not in conflict. For the one doctrine deals with the blessedness and glory of each faithful soul when it passes from this world, whereas the General Resurrection deals with the blessedness and glory of the completed and perfected community of God. There is also a further

¹ The "soul" in Revelation as in the rest of the New Testament, save the Pauline Epistles, is the bearer of the personality. The "spirit" is the immortal personal element in St. Paul. The existence of the soul seems in St. Paul's Epistles to be confined to this life.

difference. The blessedness and glory of the individual saints, who have died, and shall die, before the consummation of the world, can only be partial and incomplete. Not until all the faithful are gathered home to the kingdom of the blessed shall their blessedness be wholly fulfilled; for in the Kingdom of God the blessedness of the individual soul is conditioned by that of all the rest, and no soul can attain its highest save in the life of the blessed and completed community. Even the greatest saints of all the ages past cannot attain their perfectionment till the roll of all the saints is complete. Not till the last and weakest of God's children have been won for the kingdom can they be made perfect.

XI

"Which of these three, think you, proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers?"—ST. LUKE x. 36 [R.V.].¹

THESE words come at the close of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the interpretation of this parable we must have regard to the original question of the lawyer which led our Lord to put forth this parable.

"A certain lawyer," we read, "stood up and tempted Him saying: What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The intention of the lawyer in putting this question must be judged as honourable or malicious according to the meaning we attach to the word "tempted." For this word can in itself mean either "to test or make trial of" with an honourable motive or else to test with a malicious motive. Though many of the scribes did tempt our Lord from a malicious motive, it is not necessary to suppose that the lawyer was malicious, though he may have been unfriendly. These scribes or lawyers were deeply versed in the Law of Moses, and maintained that this Law was the exclusive and only authority on all

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, April 1, 1917.

religious questions. The prophets or psalmists were wholly subordinate in this respect, and all that they said or wrote had to be interpreted in conformity with the Law. Accordingly we may reasonably conclude that this scribe, learned in the Law of Moses, had heard of the new teacher that had come from Galilee, and, as Galilee had a low reputation for orthodoxy, he had come to make proof of His knowledge and determine whether His doctrine was conformable to the supreme authority in Judaism, and to unmask Him to the people if He were a sectarian or a schismatic. Mark how perfectly our Lord adapts His teaching to the lawyer. When the lawyer by way of testing Him said: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" our Lord at once refers him to the Law he treasured so highly: "What is written in the Law? How readeest thou?" Is not the answer to be found in that very Law of which thou professest thyself to be a disciple and teacher? And the lawyer answering said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." This answer of the lawyer combines Deut. vi. 5 and Lev. xix. 18. It is worth observing that here St. Luke diverges from the first two Gospels which assign these words to our Lord. Hitherto it has often been held that St. Luke was wrong and that this combination of the two duties was first enunciated by our Lord as St. Matthew and St.

Mark recount. But since it is now known that they were already combined in an old Jewish book¹ written in Galilee a full century before the Christian era, the statement in St. Luke may be the more original. Of course the narrative may be abbreviated here and our Lord's words may have been to this effect, "Hast thou not read of man's duty to God in the Law and likewise of his duty to his neighbour?"—words which would suggest to the lawyer the combination designed by our Lord.

However this may be, the statement in St. Luke is presupposed by the words of our Lord which follow: "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live" (x. 28). Let these commands—love God and your neighbour—be fulfilled by thee and thou shalt inherit eternal life. Thus the lawyer is answered out of his beloved book of the Law. But the answer is very disconcerting. It had not only justified Christ in the presence of the multitude but had raised very disquieting thoughts in the lawyer's own mind. The tables were turned; for now, instead of being a religious official testing our Lord, he is conscious that he is himself being submitted to a test before the people—not of intellectual conformity with the Law but of practical faithfulness to it: "This do and thou shalt live": and so out of a desire, as the Evangelist writes, "to justify himself," he follows up his first question with another bearing on the words of the Law he has just re-

¹ *I.e.* in the *Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs*: see my edition.

peated: "And who is my neighbour?" Who are the individuals to whom I am under so great an obligation? Who are those who have such immense and inevitable claims upon me? Now to understand this question aright we must remember that in Lev. xix. 18, where the words "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" occur, the sphere of this precept is limited absolutely to Israelites and to such strangers as had taken upon themselves the yoke of the Law. None others had the right according to the Mosaic Law to be designated neighbour. The context runs: "Thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbour and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance on the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The lawyer, therefore, partly on doctrinal grounds, and still more on practical grounds, requests a definition of the term "neighbour." He wants to have a definite limit set on the application of this law, just as Peter desired the duty of forgiving an offending neighbour to be limited to seven times.

The term neighbour could, he felt, only embrace a certain limited and well-defined class, since he was required by the Law to love them as himself. According to the current code of Jewish teachers, it could not, he knew, include certain bodies of men within Judaism—such as the so-called "people of the land" who, though Jews, did not observe the Law, and the Samaritans, nor yet could it include the Gentile

nations from whom they were separated as by an impassable gulf.

Would this new teacher, the lawyer reflected, make the term "neighbour" applicable to a larger or more limited number of people? Herein the lawyer suggested a fruitful subject of debate and casuistry, in the course of which he hoped to justify himself and make his escape from the impossible position into which he had so unwittingly thrust himself.

Now in reply to this question: "Who is my neighbour?" our Lord begins the narrative of the Good Samaritan, and in the course of this narrative He abandons the narrow position of the Old Testament on this question and takes higher ground: He transforms the conception of the term "neighbour" and gives it a wider range. For He makes it clear that if a man truly loves another as himself, he must, by a spiritual necessity, prove himself neighbourly, and in proving himself a neighbour to that other he will come to recognise him as a neighbour and so get an answer to the question: "Who is my neighbour?" In other words, our Lord says: The right question to ask is not, Who is my neighbour? but Do I show myself a neighbour? If a man begins with this question and responds in the right spirit, then the number of his neighbours will grow in the pleasure of his faithfulness. For as regards the duty of being a neighbour love owns no limit to its obligations save its inability to do more.

The parable begins: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead" (x. 30). No fitter locality could be chosen for the scene of this parable. During the eight or more hours' journey from Jerusalem to Jericho there was not a single habitation to be seen on the route save the little inn which is mentioned presently. This rugged barren road was likewise notorious for its bad reputation as the haunt of robbers who lived by plunder.

Some three centuries later Jerome writes that there was one place on this road called the Red or Bloody Way¹ from the blood that had there been shed, and that in his own time a fort had been built in this wilderness by the Romans to secure the safety of travellers.

To return. As the poor traveller lay bleeding and half dead on the road, "by chance a certain priest was going down that way and when he saw him he passed by on the other side." The words "by chance" mean that the one man's power to help and the other man's need of help were here brought into relation—apparently fortuitously,—but the priest failed to recognise this divine summons on his helpfulness; for "when he saw him he passed by on the other side."

¹ This statement is possibly not trustworthy, since this road bore the name Adummim (= "red") eight centuries earlier: cf. Josh. xv. 7, xviii. 17.

Jericho was a city of the priests, and this priest, having executed his office in the order of his course, was returning home to Jericho from Jerusalem. "And in like manner," our Lord proceeds, "a Levite also when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side."

The conduct of both the priest and the Levite is very simply and suggestively described. They came, they saw, they passed by. How inhuman and unnatural, one is ready to declare; but, though their conduct is so lacking in humanity, it is, however, very natural. The very monotony of the description in both cases, they came, they saw, they passed by, suggests that their conduct so far from being unusual was quite customary. These two men did what the majority of men are doing in one form or another every day: what several Christian nations also are doing this very day with far greater inhumanity and far less excuse. But to this application of the parable we shall return presently.

No doubt the priest and the Levite discovered many grounds for justifying their neglect to their own consciences. An act of robbery and practically of murder had just been committed, and the robbers might still be close at hand. To tarry a moment in such an ill-famed neighbourhood was to invite a like outrage upon themselves, and to attempt to render adequate help would be to incur the like risks. Why, therefore, should they im-

peril their own safety? How like to most of our modern pacifists are the priest and the Levite? Moreover, the fact that the wounded man could make no clamorous appeal for succour enabled them to get past him speedily, before compassion had time to assert itself within them and cause them internal discomfort or trouble of conscience.

But though they got past with less discomfort, they did not do so with less guilt; for they had closed their hearts to a case of grievous distress that God's Providence had placed at their very feet, and had refused to help where God's summons to this task was unmistakable, save to the deaf ear and the deadened heart. In thus making their escape, as they believed, from an irksome duty they were, though perhaps unconsciously, making themselves exiles from God's presence. The failure of these two men is all the greater since they were the express guardians and preachers of a law that enforced the claims of humanity and love to all fellow-countrymen, and were just returning from the sacred services in which they had been engaged in the Temple at Jerusalem, and from the solemn prayers that were well fitted to bring them into sympathy with all the deepest needs of their brethren.

The lesson conveyed by the conduct of the priest and Levite in the parable is one that comes home to all of us. We must guard against identifying religious services and worship with religion itself. Religious services

and worship are in part the means whereby the religious life is maintained, and in part the expression of that life. But the forms of religion, however regularly observed, are no guarantee for the growth of love in the heart : they are not even a security against the hardening of the heart, which may actually wither in the routine of such observances. Thus the man who ministers at God's altar may fail in the greater ministry of life. So far as our religion is from God, it will, nay, it must, find expression in the service of God and man.

The priest and the Levite having passed by, a scene of a very different kind claims our attention. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, 34. And came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine ; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host and said : Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee."

In the Samaritan we have a very different character to that of the priest and Levite. His nationality is mentioned and not a word more. But how much does the mention of such an accursed race mean to Jewish ears ? The Jews hated the Samaritans as heretics and enemies, and treated them as wholly outside the pale of the Jewish Church : and the

Samaritans were just as active in their hostility and ill-will to the Jews.

Why, then, should this Samaritan render help to one of the hated nation of the Jews? Besides, he was travelling through an unfriendly country and so was exposed to far greater danger than the priest and Levite. He had therefore excellent reasons for taking the prudent course and leaving the wounded man to his fate. But far otherwise did he act. "When he saw him he was moved with compassion," and forgetful of all the counsels of prudence, he forthwith gave himself wholeheartedly to the care of the sufferer, bound up his wounds, and setting him on his beast took him to the one solitary inn on this dreary and dangerous road. The several acts of helpfulness are carefully enumerated: there is no emotionalism and no ostentation: everything is done tactfully and with thoroughness, with good sense, without parade or sentimentality. This helpfulness is not the outcome of overwhelming emotion, but of a temper accustomed to render kindly offices when an actual need arises. There is no extravagance or ostentation in the sum given to the host—just enough to meet immediate necessities, while he promises to pay all additional expenditure on his return.

Our Lord closes the parable with the words, "Which of these three proved neighbour to him who fell among the robbers? Was it he who showed love or he that showed it not?"

If, our Lord implies to the lawyer, you had love in your heart, you would not have asked, Who is my neighbour? that is, Who has claims on my help? to what individual am I bound to render service? But you would have asked: To whom can I prove myself a neighbour? Love is true neighbourliness, and seeks not limits for its exercise but outlets. Thus attention is fixed, not on the objects of love, but on those who exercise it. Get hold, our Lord would say, of the right spirit, and you will not have to ask, Who is my neighbour? Your neighbour will be every one who stands in some relation to you and in real need, and to whom you can render real help. Thus the direct answer of the lawyer is answered; for love *discovers* the bounds of neighbourhood: *it recognises them, but does not create them.* Love does not make one man neighbour to another. It does not create this relationship. That is already a divine fact. It has been created already by God. God has put us into certain relationships and connected us by ties of blood, marriage, friendship, nationality, or even simply of humanity, and love alone can recognise these: and can interpret the duties they entail. The nearness of the relation and the urgency of the need determine the field of its exercise, and the ability to help defines the range of its obligation. Thus love can own no limits save its inability to do more.

Herein also our Lord answers the lawyer's first question: What must I do to inherit

eternal life? Christ's answer is: Have the same spirit of love that the Samaritan had. Judged in the light of this truth, many outlaws from the Church are nearer the kingdom of heaven than many professed members of the household of faith, who, through lack of love, ignore the most vital services they owe to others and rob even such services, as they feel themselves constrained to render, of the grace and courtesy that should clothe them as a vesture.

But the teaching of this great parable is not limited to the relations of one man to his neighbour, but applies just as validly to the relations of any one group of individuals to any other group within the nation, such as capital and labour, employers and employed.

Furthermore, its mandate is no less authoritative as to the relations of one nation to another. For 1900 years the Christian world has with some notable exceptions been seeking to evade the Christianisation of international politics. While some countries have in a measure admitted the requirement of Christ that they should be neighbours to the other nations, and especially to the weaker nations, others have declared both by word and by deed that the teaching of Christ cannot be applied to such relations, that might not right is paramount: that the material and other interests of the strong state must be asserted wholly irrespective of those of the weaker states, and that in the pursuit of such an aim the strong state must not suffer its hands to be bound or

even weakened by any convictions, however exalted or divine, of truth or mercy, of honour or righteousness.

If Christ's teaching applies to international relations—and how can the Christian conscience dispute it when even the most thorough worldling is coming practically to admit that it must?—what are we to say of the neutral nations in the present great world war, which in its main issues may be justly described as a war of right against might, of Christ against Antichrist. Is not the conduct of such neutrals exactly that of the priest and the Levite in the parable? Have they not adopted the counsels of prudence and immediate safety and not those of duty and righteousness? In the case of the smaller states this is partly to be condoned on the ground of their manifest weakness in the face of the modern Teutonic Antichrist, the mighty Beast of the Apocalypse which is thundering at their doors. But what are we to say of the great Republic across the seas? In that nation, it is true, there is a large and ever-growing minority which protests against its selfish isolation and its immoral neutrality. But, notwithstanding this protest, the official leaders of the United States, supported by an immense body of pacifists, have hitherto pursued the path of comfort and gain, and while professing admirable moral and religious platitudes, have tended to degrade the whole body of the nation and to brand its escutcheon with the blazon of an ineffaceable shame. Thus while the States have

never failed to demand indemnities for the most trifling damage to their material possessions, they have never officially lifted up their voice, much less have they drawn their sword, against the slow torture and destruction of the unoffending people of Belgium by a power that outrivals in cruelty and barbarism the most infamous empires of the past, and the official attitude of the States as a whole, and especially of the Western, in this war has betrayed an astounding meanness, implying, as it does, that so long as their own comfort and gains are unaffected, there has been no ground for their intervention, and that they have no concern with the outrages inflicted on weaker and less happily situated states, though all states are neighbours from the Christian standpoint, being simply different families in the great Commonwealth of God.¹ The United States are at last, we know, breaking the bonds of the heathen policy they have pursued hitherto, and henceforth it is to be hoped that the kingdoms of this world, great or small, will never again be able to stand aloof when the supreme questions of

¹ I have thought it best to let this paragraph stand as it was written and as it was delivered in the Abbey, since it expresses what thoughtful men felt regarding the United States from the early months of the War till that date. Happily the Great Republic has broken with the old and evil tradition of the past in regard to its international duties, and thrown in its lot whole-heartedly with the nations which are leagued together to destroy the Teutonic menace to liberty, justice, and truth upon earth. And in contrast with its former insistence on small material indemnities, it now shows the most unbounded disinterestedness in its lavish offerings of men and treasure, and makes it clear, alike by word and deed, that it has no other end in view than the vindication of human freedom and the enthronement of righteousness on earth.

liberty and righteousness are at issue—to stand aloof, as they have so often done, and ask sullenly like Cain of old: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” for the answer of God to all such neutrals is this and none other: “The voice of thy brother’s blood calleth to Me from the ground.”

XII

“Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another.”—
I PETER V. 5 [R.V.].¹

I

HUMILITY is the chiefest of the Christian graces, and hence its achievement is correspondingly difficult. But not only is the achievement difficult; there is some difficulty in apprehending its right meaning. The entire Greek world with all its wisdom regarded, as we shall see, humility in every aspect as a failing if not a vice. The pre-Christian Jewish world recognised its profound religious worth as directed towards God but can hardly have been said to have apprehended the obligation of this grace towards their neighbours.

Even St. Chrysostom falls into the amazing error of defining humility as a making ourselves small when we are great. And that this unreal, untrue self-depreciation has but too generally been conceived as the essence of humility is to be inferred from the various caricatures of humility in the world of light literature. Now, it is not unfitting that in this great Abbey

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, Sept. 16, 1917.

founded by the Benedictine Order we should turn our thoughts occasionally to the Christian grace of humility, which Benedict made the basis of the scheme of virtues on which the Christian character was to be built, following therein the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 2).

To determine the meaning of a difficult word the best method is frequently to deal with the origin of the word and its various developments. In the present instance it is of course quite impossible to enter on a discussion of the genesis of the Greek word for "humility." And yet, if we wish to understand the word, we cannot wholly evade such a discussion, though of course it must be compressed within a few sentences. First of all the New Testament here for "humility" is *ταπεινοφροσύνη*. Now, so far as our present knowledge goes, this word is a coinage of Christianity; for no Greek writer employed it before the Christian era, and none, apart from the influence of Christian writings, made use of it afterwards. Even the adjective *ταπεινόφρων* and the verb *ταπεινοφρονεῖν*, though occurring each once in the LXX, are not found in Classical Greek before the Christian era. We must therefore fall back on the first element of this compound word, namely, *ταπεινός* — a word which is of frequent occurrence in profane Greek. But, whereas it means "humble" in the New Testament, its connotation in Classical and later profane Greek is of a very different description.

Save in a few exceptional passages—perhaps at the most six—where it bears the sense of modest, or unpretentious, its general meaning was mean-spirited, cringing, servile, while that of the corresponding noun—*ταπεινότης*, where it was used in a moral sense—is meanness of spirit, baseness, vileness.

We thus conclude that whereas the Greek word for “humble” in the New Testament is derived from Classical Greek, the meaning attached to it in the New Testament must be derived from elsewhere. But, though humility appears for the first time as a grace in its full maturity in the New Testament, it has not for the first time been so conceived there. For in the Old Testament the idea of humility—at all events in its Godward aspect—is fully developed.

But this point requires fuller treatment, and for this reason that humility is concerned not only with a man’s right attitude towards God, but also with his right attitude towards himself and towards his neighbour. Now whilst the Old Testament dwells continually on a man’s right attitude towards God, it can scarcely be said to deal at all with his right attitude towards his neighbour in the way of humility. Let us turn, however, to the Old Testament and its teaching as regards man’s right attitude to God. Nowhere in all literature are the duty and blessedness of humility towards God more profoundly and sublimely expressed. Thus an eighth-century prophet

sums up the whole duty of man in the never-to-be-forgotten words (Mic. vi. 8): "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God"; while a post-Exilic prophet declares:

Thus saith the High and Lofty One
That inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy:
I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

(Is. lvii. 15.)

Again in the Psalms the same truth is enforced from another standpoint:

Thou delightest not in sacrifice,
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering,
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and contrite heart Thou wilt not despise.

(Ps. li. 16-17.)

And just as humility towards God on the part of man is extolled as that which draws down upon it the benediction of heaven, so are pride and scorn set forth as the things that must entail the displeasure of God: "Surely He scorneth the scornful (or proud), but giveth grace to the lowly" (Prov. iii. 34): "pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18), or again:

The lofty looks of man shall be brought low,
And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

(Is. ii. 11.)

It is needless to emphasise further this conception of humility so amply attested in the Old Testament. But, if we would discover any real recognition of the complementary duty of humility towards man, we must go farther afield: we must leave the Old Testament and pass onward to later Jewish literature. In the most ethical Jewish work written before the Christian era—the *Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs*—(Test. Gad. v. 3) we have the following reference to humility: "Righteousness casteth out hatred, humility destroyeth envy, for he that is righteous and humble is ashamed to do what is unjust, being reprov'd not of another, but of his own heart, because the Lord looketh on his inclination."

Besides this statement regarding a man's humility towards his neighbour, there are one or more in Ecclesiasticus, but in Ecclesiasticus the humility is decidedly of a prudential nature, and therefore cannot be taken account of here.

Even in Jewish tradition no saying bearing on humility manward is attributed to any of the Jewish sages in the two centuries before the Christian era, save to Rabbi Meir, who, according to a late work (Lev. R. i.), said: "My humility is my greatness, and my greatness is my humility" (*Jewish Encyc.* vi. 491).

With later Rabbinic writers we have here no concern. Thus we have seen that till the advent of Christianity one aspect of humility, *i.e.* the right attitude of a man towards his neighbour, had hardly more than dawned on

the religious consciousness of pre-Christian Judaism, and certainly had never been taught by it as a duty nor acknowledged by it as such.

Such a fact is easy to understand. When once a man recognises his relation to God as the Creator and Preserver of all things, as the source from which he individually comes, and the Power by which he is individually sustained, the consciousness of humility in the divine presence cannot but be borne in upon him. Before such a Being—Omniscient, Omnipresent, the Fount of all truth and love, compassion and forgiveness—he cannot but fall down and worship. Thus throughout the ancient world—in Assyria, as well as in Judea—wherever the belief in God was apprehended even imperfectly, the consciousness of humility towards God was necessarily begotten, however imperfectly.

But it is different as regards man's attitude towards his neighbour. In the Old Testament, as we have indicated, the consciousness of humility towards one's neighbour was never adequately felt, and the duty therefore never inculcated, because the supreme worth of the individual soul had not yet been apprehended, though the religious thought and experience of Israel's saints were steadily advancing towards such an apprehension.

Now before we enter on the practical study of humility as it is set forth in the New Testament it will be helpful to turn for a brief space to the Greek world before and

about the Christian era, and consider the ideals that Greek teachers of ethics impressed on their disciples. With the exception of a few references to later Stoicism, we shall confine our attention mainly to Aristotle's Ethics, which from the fourth century B.C. onward served as an ethical manual throughout the ancient Greek and Roman worlds and later in Christendom itself.

As humility, according to St. Bernard, is the chiefest of all the graces, greatness of soul, or rather great-souledness, was, according to Aristotle, the highest and most inclusive type of all the heathen virtues (*Nic. Eth.* iv. 3).

Thus the great-souled man was, according to the Greek sage, truthful, magnanimous in overlooking offences, self-respecting, and indifferent to death. But on nearer inspection we find that these virtues are not the offspring of moral goodness, as conceived in later times. Thus the great-souled man does not cheat, because he does not care about money: he avoids vice, not because it is wrong in the modern sense, but because it is unworthy of him: he is free from cowardice, because he sets no high value on life. Other characteristics of the great-souled man are not so favourable. He is not given to admiration, because nothing is great in his eyes: he doesn't bear malice, since remembering anything, and especially wrongs, is unbecoming his character: he expresses his mind truly and freely; for his genuine contempt for others makes him frank in utterance. He

is glad to do a benefit ; for such an action puts him in a superior position ; but ashamed to receive one, because he is thereby humiliated. Accordingly the great-souled man remembers those whom he has benefited, but not those by whom he has been benefited, and he takes pleasure in hearing of his own kind acts, but not of those done to himself.

We cannot here dilate further on the ideal man of Aristotle. We shall do no more than add that, according to Aristotle himself, this character can only belong to really great men : for such great-souledness, unless accompanied by qualities superior to those of the rest of the world, would be supremely ridiculous.

Now this Greek conception of the ideal man is opposed in nearly every respect to the ideal man as set forth in the Gospels, and above all in respect to the grace of humility ; for in Aristotle's view the great-souled man could not be humble. He felt himself deserving of the best, and he exhibited alike in every word and gesture the self-esteem, the pride, the arrogance that filled his soul. He reminds us in these respects of the German superman, though of course he is far superior to this ideal impersonation of the Teutonic virtues.

There was only one check upon the pride of the Greek, and this was the fear, which appears occasionally in Greek history, and is a commonplace of Greek tragedy, that the gods were jealous of great prosperity, and were likely to visit with punishment undue self-

exaltation and arrogance. That arrogance and pride sooner or later draw down God's chastening hand is rightly the belief of Christendom, but it is otherwise as regards prosperity and well-being. That God regards these with displeasure there is no evidence in the Bible. On the contrary, it is definitely taught that every good and perfect gift cometh down from heaven. And yet this belief, this superstition, for it is nothing better, prevails at the present day especially in circles where faith is lacking, and people, otherwise intelligent, are afraid to acknowledge the goodness of God in respect to health or other blessings, without forthwith touching wood or falling back on some equally heathen practice, lest forsooth these good gifts of God may be taken from them.

We thus see that in the ethics of Aristotle there was no room for the grace of humility. And if this is true of Aristotle's ethics, it is still more so of the great Ethical System of the Stoics, later developments of which were contemporary with the birth of Christianity. Now to Stoicism the heathen world was mainly beholden for its moral teaching at the Christian era, but the best of its lessons in this province were developed independently in Christianity. For underlying all the extravagant claims of Stoicism—and we shall recognise their extravagance presently—it enforced the ethical truth that for all right conduct and all true happiness inner moral integrity is the indispensable condition. From the noblest and

best of the Stoics—Epictetus—even the most faithful Christian can still learn much if he contrasts his own achievement in the light of his opportunities with the achievement of Epictetus in the light of the numberless disqualifications that hemmed him in on every side. But since Epictetus was not born till a generation after the time of Christ, his teaching does not really call for consideration here.

But taken as a system Stoicism is open to the scathing condemnation of Lecky (*Hist. of European Morals*, 1869, i. 223), who charges it with “the deification of human virtue, the total absence of all sense of sin, the proud stubborn will that deemed humiliation (? humility¹) as the worst of sins.”

The claim of Stoicism was that only the wise man was good, that the wise man alone was free, alone rich and happy, alone knew how to obey and also how to govern, alone was qualified to be a king, general, orator, poet, or prophet: and that, since Stoicism alone set forth the right views regarding the gods, only amongst the Stoics could true piety be found. The consciousness of humility was wholly inconsistent with such claims on behalf of the genuine Stoic, whereas in Christianity the better the man is the more humble he becomes. In fact the wise man as conceived by the Stoics was an inhuman and intolerable prig. He was

¹ Humility and humiliation should be carefully distinguished. Humility is distinctively a Christian grace. He who lacks it must sooner or later meet with humiliation.

without fault or failing, he knew all that there was to be known, and knew every shred of such knowledge better than any one else: he combined in his person all perfections, and was inferior to Zeus himself only in the point of his limited existence.

From this short account of Greek thought and morals it is clear that Christianity did not derive from this source its teaching on humility, the Christian ideal of which is set forth in the words of St. Paul: "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

The characteristic of the Christian ideal as contrasted with the prevailing ideas of the Greek world is its spirit of intense and ever-unfulfilled aspiration. The ideals of the Greek world were, as contrasted with the Christian, limited in their scope, and being so circumscribed were naturally more easy of attainment. Greek Art, for instance, aimed at perfection of form, and so arrived at a pitch of excellence not possible to Christian Art with its higher aims and infinite ideals. In Greek Art the object of the artist is the perfection of outward form: in Christian Art the outward form is no longer the object of the artist, but is subordinated to a higher end—the expression or suggestion of idea; and thus the outward form passes from being the reality to being merely

its outward and visible symbol. Accordingly, as the Christian ideal is infinitely higher than the Greek, its task is correspondingly more difficult, and so the sense of shortcoming, that pervades every form of human genius touched with the influence of the Christian ideal, bears witness to the different standard that Christianity has established to measure the world. The presence of this standard sets man's actual face to face with his possible, man's achievements face to face with the Eternal Realities, and thereby brings home to his conscience the feeling of overwhelming humiliation, the knowledge of the littleness and dwarfed imperfectness of his attainment. The poetry, art, science, and religious life of Christendom, all alike betray the sense of man's infinite wants with faith in his infinite possibilities, his troubled discontent with the present combined with a ceaseless straining after a nobler future, his consciousness of a beauty and righteousness and truth transcending all his experience, and yet the goal of all his endeavours.

In like manner as the other ideals of the Greek world are limited and circumscribed when contrasted with Christian ideals, so it is with the Greek conception of virtue. Virtue, according to the chief ethical teacher of the Greeks, was only perfect when the sense of effort had disappeared. According to this conception, goodness consisted in the perfection of good habits. Unhappily this conception of goodness has at times been accepted

by the Church, and set forth by its official teachers, notably so in the last two centuries, and Christian life has been identified with the effortless mechanical routine of perfected habit. Stoicism, as we have seen, made the most lofty claims on behalf of its wise man, but, even if such an ideal had ever been realised, and later Stoics confessed that it had not, there was no possibility of moral progress for their wise man. He was wholly perfect, alike in thought, desire, and action, and hence aspiration and spiritual growth were for him an impossibility. According to the Stoics, a man was either wholly good or wholly vicious. There was no middle term. It is not therefore strange that the doctrine of the universal depravity of the human race was taught so forcibly by them, and by none more so than by the Roman statesman — Seneca, who maintains that all men are wicked, that all have been wicked, and that all shall be wicked to the end of the chapter (Zeller, *Stoics*, p. 273). Now it might reasonably be supposed that the later Stoics, who asserted this doctrine of universal depravity, would at the same time maintain the need of humility on the part of man; but this is not so; for Seneca, the most emphatic proclaimer of human depravity, definitely states that humility as a mental condition (Ep. lxxviii. 8) disqualifies a man for higher spiritual attainment.

Let us now turn aside from Judaism and Stoicism, and direct our attention to the teaching of the New Testament.

According to the New Testament, Christian goodness is an aspiration ever straining towards a divine ideal, and ever receiving fulfilment, yet hardly fulfilled ere a higher has dawned upon it. Thus there can be no Christian goodness apart from effort, apart from the element of self-denial: in this respect Greek and Christian ideals stand in direct contrast. Moreover, as the Christian ideal is so high, its fulfilment is at the best imperfect: the Christian can never say, "I have done that which it was my duty to do"; for, however high his attainment, there was a higher possible. And from this contrast of that which he has done with that which it was his duty to do arises the Christian grace of humility.

Humility is thus no mere absence of pretension, no morbid, self-depreciating spirit, no transient state of feeling into which a man may work himself; but a constant characteristic of the Christian life, an ever-abiding sense of our absolute dependance on God, arising from the knowledge of God and our own souls. It is not unreal, it is not a making ourselves small when we are great (as St. Chrysostom defines it), but it is a true and right estimate of ourselves, an estimate made in all soundness of mind; an estimate which the New Testament requires us neither to falsify or lower. Thus St. Paul writes (Rom. xii. 3): "For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than

he ought to think, but so to think as to think soberly."

Thus in genuine humility there is not a single shred of make-believe. Nay, rather humility brings a man face to face with the Eternal Realities—God, his own soul, and his neighbour.

In the presence of God we come to see ourselves as we truly are: our sins, our shortcomings are brought to light, our highest attainments are seen to be full of imperfection, and we are justly stripped of every feeling of self-complacency and self-satisfaction. And if we stand in the same Presence in our dealings with our neighbour, we must often admit incapacity when it would be to our advantage to be thought capable: to confess ignorance, where our knowledge is taken for granted: to disown powers which an admiring circle thrusts upon us: and without attempting to justify or palliate our conduct, to bow to men's rebukes of the vanities, the resentments, the meannesses or even of acts of greater discredit, of which we are but too frequently guilty to our great grief of heart.

Such experiences are often painful in the extreme, but if they are encountered in the right spirit, they cannot fail to brace the character, and they are so far from robbing us of moral and spiritual force that they confirm and strengthen it, just as all yieldings to what is unreal or artificial or false weaken and tend to destroy it ultimately.

XIII

“Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another.”—
I PETER v. 5 [R.V.].¹

II

LAST Sunday afternoon we discussed the ideals of humility prevailing in the ancient world. We found that in Judaism the duty of humility on the part of man towards God was fully recognised and enforced, but that the duty of humility on the part of man towards his neighbour was inadequately, if at all, apprehended before the Christian era. We dealt briefly also with the great moral systems of Greece, and found that humility, in whatever aspect we conceive it, was an idea foreign to such systems, and that by the most cultured and moral of the Greeks humility was all but universally conceived as a synonym for mere meanness of spirit.

Thus whereas the foundation of the Christian virtue of humility is to be found in pre-Christian Judaism, hardly even a semblance of it is discoverable in the great moral systems of ancient Greece. And the ground for such

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, September 23, 1917.

diversity of attitude on this question is not far to seek. For a man's estimate of himself must naturally vary with the standard by which he measures his conduct, and must humiliate him or fill him with pride, according as he falls short of or fulfils it: and it is just this difference of standard, this infinite superiority of the Christian ideal to the Greek, that gives humility the foremost place among the Christian virtues as well as explains its taking the lowest place among the Greeks; for the goodness that achieved the standard of the Greek and grew proud from comparison of itself with lesser goodness, led to self-glorification, and so, unconscious of that sense of dependance and shortcoming which characterises the Christian grace alike as regards God and man, could see nothing in humility save sheer meanness of spirit. Thus lowness of ideal and pride of attainment go hand in hand, even as conceit of intellect is generally greatest where intellectual capacity and aspiration are least. And just as low ideals and pride of self are inseparably connected, so divine ideals and true humility are never sundered.

Christianity, as we have seen, sets man face to face with the Eternal Realities—God, his own soul, and his brother; and with the growing recognition of these, humility streams down upon him, and unless he shuts himself out from this vision splendid of the unseen and eternal, his pride of attainment must vanish for ever.

Let us now study humility in respect of

God and humility in respect of our neighbour, adjourning for the time being the consideration of humility as regards ourselves.

The outcome of humility Godward is an enlarged and truer service of God, and this is no less true of humility towards man. "Be ye clothed with humility to serve one another." Humility manward does not require us to think ourselves more foolish or wicked than every profligate or fool we meet, or call for self-abasement only before such as are nobler and wiser than ourselves; for this is not the nature of humility manward at all. It arises from no comparison of our own and a neighbour's worth: all such comparisons are misleading. For we know no man's inner life, his real failures and his real attainments. We can never truly discover what goes on in another man's heart. We may detect his sins and frailties, but, whether he has striven against them or to what extent, we have no sure means of determining. The moral conflicts which are waged within us can only be known to God and our own souls. "We may be able to say, this man has lied, has pilfered, has forged; and that man has apparently gone through life with clean hands. But can we say that the first has not struggled long, though unsuccessfully, against temptations under which the second would have succumbed, without an effort? We know one man to be generous and open-handed, and another close, niggardly, and mean; but the generosity of the one, as well as the niggardli-

ness of the other, may be a mere yielding to native temperament. In the eye of heaven a long life of beneficence in the one may have cost less exertion, and may indicate less virtue than a few rare hidden acts of kindness wrung by duty out of the reluctant and unsympathetic nature of the other."¹ And as we are unfit to judge our neighbours' real character, just as assuredly are we unfit to pronounce upon our own. We have not the adequate means for such a judgment; for our conscience may have been degraded or silenced by a persistent course of evil-doing. St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 3-4) emphasises this fact when he declares that he judges not himself; for although he was conscious of nothing against himself, yet he was not thereby justified; for that He that judged him was the Lord.

Humility towards our neighbour has nothing to do with comparisons between our own and our neighbour's worth: for all such comparisons are idle and deceptive. Humility towards our neighbour is not based on vain judgments, but on the great universal truth that we are all children of the one Father, and that therefore our neighbours, however blind, mean, and degraded they may be in their present condition, are as children of God capable, now or later, here or hereafter, of the highest heroism and saintliness, of the divinest things in heaven and earth, and are therefore worthy of

¹ A quotation from Greg in Momerie's *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 250.

the best services we can render. If they were worthy of Christ's love, they are surely worthy of ours: if it was fitting that He should gird Himself with humility to do them service, surely it is still more incumbent on us. There is nothing too exalted, too cultured, too good within us to be used in helping some wandering child to return to the Father's home, in lifting into all the reality of life the things that for him are still divinely possible.

Humility Godward thus arises from the knowledge of God, of His infinite holiness and love and truth; humility manward, from a true knowledge of man's divine nature and worth. And each issues in service—humility towards God in the service of God,—in unending growth into the infinite of divine goodness and truth; and humility towards man in the service of man, in ever richer developments of self-forgetful love and self-forgetful life for the brethren.

Thus for the performance of faithful service we must gird ourselves with humility, and it is this thought that helps us to interpret those words of St. Paul, so generally misunderstood, as it seems: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. ii. 3). Does this command, understood as it generally is, seem a possible one for St. Paul to give? Can we be expected to esteem every unworthy brother as better than ourselves? Would this not be an utterly unreal thing, a mere case of make-believe on our part?

Would not such a judgment as this be the outcome of some morbid fancy or mortified feeling, and not the offspring of that soundness of mind which the same Apostle urges his readers elsewhere to cherish? This, then, on general grounds cannot be the meaning of the words. The context, moreover, is also against it; the idea of moral comparison—of esteeming others as better than ourselves—is alien to the sense of the entire passage; the whole thought of the Apostle deals with the service of the brotherhood as opposed to the furtherance of party interest or of selfish interest; and as the best means of enforcing this St. Paul exhorts his readers to have the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus, who, for the service and salvation of all mankind, girded Himself with our humanity. The thought conveyed by St. Peter's words, "All of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another," should underlie the command of St. Paul with which we have been dealing—"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." But the English words as they stand cannot convey this meaning.

Thus this rendering of St. Paul's words is against all we have learnt so far on the question of Christian humility, but the case is still stronger against it; for the thought they convey is against the thought of the context, in which they occur; for it is surely needless to say that our Lord did not come to save those whom He came to save owing to His

esteeming them morally better than Himself, but that their moral and spiritual needs—their infinite worth—had claims on His service. And since St. Paul here exhorts us to have the same mind in serving our brethren as our Lord had in coming to save them, it follows that there can be no question here of moral comparison. The R.V. introduces the same wrong idea. It is difficult to render the clause, but we can hardly go wrong if we translate: “In your humility counting others as having precedence of yourselves.”

Almost the same idea is found in Rom. xii. 10, though the diction is different: “in honour preferring one another.”

The meaning which we have attached to the Greek participle (*ὑπερέχοντας*, Phil. ii. 3) here is found also in the LXX, where Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 40) declares to Joseph: “Only in the throne will I be greater than thou.” Pharaoh here makes no claim to being morally superior to Joseph: but simply states that he takes precedence of Joseph, as being the ultimate source of power and authority. Let us now return to St. Paul’s words in Phil. ii. 2-4. These might be freely paraphrased as follows: “Live in unity, knit together in the concord of a common love and affection and aims: do nothing to advance the ends of party faction, nothing to gratify personal vanity, but in your humility let the claims of the brethren take precedence of your purely personal claims, thus giving your regard not to your own individual interests but also to

theirs." This is the ideal which St. Paul sets before us: it might be summarised in a dozen words as follows: Be a servant of man, *i.e.* the highest in man—not of party nor of self.

Thus as St. Paul taught that our Lord's Incarnation was in essence a girding of Himself with humility in order to serve, that is, to save mankind, so he calls on each of us, whatever our gifts or position, to serve our brethren, an admonition that agrees in essence with that given in St. Peter's Epistle—"Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." These latter words recall one of the most touching and significant acts in the life of our Lord. On the last night that He spent with His disciples before the great tragedy on Calvary, on the same night on which His disciples wrangled with each other as to which should be accounted greatest, Jesus arose after supper and, girding Himself with a towel, washed the feet of each of them in turn. In so doing He symbolised in a single act the whole object of His life on earth, and at the same time taught His disciples, who had been contending with each other who should be greatest, that greatness consisted not in lordship but service, and that he who rendered the most disinterested and widest service was likewise the greatest in the kingdom of God. But since we are bidden to gird ourselves with humility to serve one another, and since St. Paul assures us that in so doing we are to have the same mind, the same purpose as our Lord, then the reason for such service

is the infinite worth of the person to be served. In such service there is no arbitrary or capricious demeaning of ourselves, no belittling of ourselves in comparison with our neighbour, in fact, there is no comparison of ourselves with our neighbour at all: our sole thought should be: here is one whose highest well-being we can really help. And when we are so assured, the object aimed at calls for the consecration of our highest powers, and is worthy of the best we can offer on the altar of service. We are striving to serve those whom God has deigned to call His sons, to help those for whom Christ was content to be betrayed and to suffer death. In such service there is no element of humiliation, for there is no comparison of our own with a brother's worth—a fact that needs repeating again and again. In the judgment of God—and His judgment alone is valid—our neighbour whom we are helping may be far above us or far below us, but such considerations can have no legitimate bearing on our action so far as, like our Master, we gird ourselves with humility to serve one another.

Humility thus gives birth to unending effort, more and more to efface self in the service of the brethren, more and more to efface self in the service of God.

But there is a third aspect of humility which calls for consideration. We have already considered first the duty of humility Godward, and in the next place the duty of humility manward or to our neighbour. We have still to deal

with the duty of humility towards ourselves—and that—not our actual—but our possible selves.

Christ sets before us the vision of what we should be in contrast to what we are, and thus humility is begotten—not by depreciating our present attainment, but by enlarging our ideals, by comparing what we are at its best with what we ought to have been, and so calling forth from us the confession of the Publican in the Parable, “God be merciful to me, the sinner,” not as in the English version, “to me a sinner.” The consciousness of our sin is supreme. Christianity kindles aspiration by comparing what we are with what we still may be, our actuality with our possibility—and fills us with hope and the strong assurance that we “can do all things through Him that strengtheneth” us.

The revelation of God’s righteousness evokes humility in man—a humility, however, which could only end in a pessimistic despair—were this the sole gospel of Christianity. But the crowning revelation of God’s Fatherhood quickens aspiration by giving man to feel that the attainment of this righteousness is possible through the life of sonship in God.

Humility opens man’s heart to divine inspirations, to promptings from on high, to aspirations after God, kindled by God Himself therein. We must, however, guard against mistaking these graces from God for graces in ourselves, these inspirations from on high for tokens of our own individual merit; for they

are not ours to claim as virtue or worth on our part; they are self-communications of God to the hearts of His children, glimpses of His Being that He has permitted to dawn upon us; and that we are the recipients of such divine disclosures, so far from contributing to our personal pretensions, can only multiply our responsibilities and deepen the burden of our obligations.

And in this connection we must protest against a not infrequent confusion of religion with the play of religious emotion and feeling, the repentant regret or ready rapture called forth in the closet, or at the altar, or by the voice of the preacher. This conception of religion has lulled many a heart into delusive peace; for the man who is conscious of high aspirations and quick emotional sensibility to religious appeal can with difficulty conceive himself faithless to divine opportunities and the duties of everyday life. It is needless to emphasise the falsity of such a type of religion; for every emotion and impulse, every throb of penitence and aspiration, unless they attain their divinely appointed goal and issue in a new and purer devotedness to God and man, are merely so much waste of our spiritual resources, and enfeeble the nature it was their sole purpose to strengthen and inspire. The high thought, the noble impulse, the kindling emotion, are God's working in us, and it is our task to translate these into the reality of living deeds, clinging fast to them with fear and trem-

bling, with reverence and love, till they yield us all their blessing and fulfil in us their God-appointed end ; for these are messengers from our Lord, nay, our Lord Himself knocking at the door of our hearts, who, if we but open the door, will enter in and abide with us for ever.

To give effect to such divinely given aspirations calls for self-sacrifice and fresh effort every step we take in advance. In the life of our Lord this element was never wanting, and what He needed, His followers cannot dispense with, however uneventful or fenced from outward trial their lives may be.

The Christian life is one of growing aspiration and larger attainment, in which every advance is won at a cost ; for Christian goodness has no part in actions which call for no effort or sacrifice, whether as springing from a natural goodness of temperament or the mechanism of settled habit.

And here we must enter a further protest against the identification of Christianity with any aggregate of good habits ; for good habits are not goodness, but the offspring of a goodness that lived sometime in the past, and may have long since been dead ; they are naturally stationary ; they impart a facility in doing what we have already done, but can never lead beyond themselves ; their tendency is to lessen effort as they become more perfect, till at last they attain a mechanical efficiency ; and thus as they advance towards perfection their spiritual worth vanishes towards zero.

In thus denying the claim of good habits to be identical with goodness, we are not in any way depreciating the real worth of habits in the service of religion. And their real worth is great, for they are, as it were, our garrisons in occupation of the fortresses we have already carried, securing for us the fruits of past victories, and forming a base of operations for future conquests. Habits, moreover, are not mere occasions for the exercise of impulses and inclinations we already have. Prayer at stated times, for instance, is not merely a repeated opportunity for giving expression to impulses, desires, and aspirations we already have, but also an occasion, through communion with God therein, for begetting fresh desires and impulses, and for kindling aspiration. Fixed times of prayer are thus just what is necessary for the gaining of fresh inspirations and impulses, and for disciplining ourselves into a habit of abiding and ever-growing aspiration. On the other hand, if we hold aloof from prayer till the inclination takes us, we rest our communion with God on that which wavers fitfully, and in the end may wholly fail us. There can be no more fatal doctrine than that which surrenders everything to our inclinations.

But though habits are necessary to the Christian life, they form no element in that life, unless they are living, are developing into greater purity and fulness; for the Christian life is not the routine of an easy experience, nor a movement from one scene to another

on the same level, but an unending struggle, not always with the same foes and for the same reward, but daily from higher levels and for fresh glories.

We should have habits of worship, but not of resting in these without aspiring therein to fuller fellowship with God. We should have habits of helping others, but not without advance of motive, scope, and efficiency. Habits are an element of the Christian life when they are living functions of that life, and when their present is ever transcending their past.

And for the growth of Christian habits there is no training school like God's school—and that is life, and not the cloister, not the convent, not the hermit's cell. For the most inveterate vices can flourish comfortably under the most carefully devised routine of religious or so-called religious duties.

Thus Christian life in all its aspects is a steady progress from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from glory to glory; a constant growth into an ideal that is practically infinite; for with each fresh grace won, a diviner ideal ever dawns upon the faithful heart, and deepens humility as it enlarges aspiration. Self-complacency and simple self-content are impossible elements in the Christian life; for all men that are truly striving after conformity with God's will see a higher than they can achieve, and stand self-condemned in the presence of their own ideal, though that ideal

may through many an unfaithfulness have been depressed below what God had made possible for them. Thus all self-reliance for spiritual accord with God is cut off: our peace is not that of attainment, but that which springs from a childlike faith casting itself on the Father's infinite mercies, revealed in His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

XIV

“He taught them many things in parables.”—ST. MARK iv. 2.¹

I

IN this and the succeeding four sermons I propose to deal with the parable of the Sower, or, as it should rather be called, the parable of the Divers Soils; for the parable is not really concerned with the sower or the seed. No fault is found either with the sower or the seed. The parable has for its theme the different kinds of soil in which the seed is sown, and its object is to show that the fruitfulness or the unfruitfulness of the seed is conditioned by the nature of the soil—in short, that the word of the Kingdom is differently received according to the moral and spiritual condition of the hearers.

But before we enter on the treatment of our subject we have first to try and determine the reason which led our Lord to use so frequently the parabolic form of speech. We are not here embarking on the gratuitous discussion of a purely academic problem. We cannot

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, March 6, 1914.

in fact evade the problem, since the statements that have given birth to it occur in connection with the parable before us. Our immediate problem, therefore, is to discover the object with which our Lord spake to the people in parables. Most expositors in the past, were agreed that the parable was used by our Lord with a twofold purpose: the first was to reveal heavenly truth; the second was to conceal it.

In the Old Testament and Apocrypha the purpose of the parable is always to reveal some truth, and that this is the case in nearly all the Gospel parables is universally conceded. In these it is agreed that the primary end of the parable is to present the doctrine, as yet unknown, so directly to the hearers' view that they shall intuitively recognise its truth. This is done in one of two ways. First, the teaching may be given under the concrete image of an individual case, as in the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Pharisee and the Publican. Here the particular case so illustrates the thought of the Teacher that its religious truth is at once intuitively recognised. Such parables have been designated *typical*, since they convey their teaching under an individual type. A particular example is given, and from this a general rule of conduct inferred. It is now the tendency of modern scholarship to deny that these are real parables, on the ground that in the *parable proper* the relations obtaining in one sphere are explained by comparison with the relations obtaining in another

sphere: in other words, from a story moving wholly within the sphere of physical or purely human life the hearer is intended to grasp a truth which belongs to the sphere of the religious life. If we accept this definition, and there is no just ground for rejecting it, we must exclude from the class of parables proper the above parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, and the Pharisee and the Publican, since in these there is no transition from one sphere of relations to another, but simply an example or type of conduct is portrayed, which the faithful are to follow within the same sphere of relations.

In our discussion of the typical parable we have practically defined the nature of the symbolical parable or the parable proper. The parable proper involves essentially a comparison of the relations or conditions obtaining in one sphere with the relations or conditions obtaining in another sphere. The fundamental presupposition of the parable, therefore, in the New Testament is that an all-pervading harmony prevails between the natural world and the spiritual world, so that the states and relations, the operations and happenings of the physical world are not merely illustrations of analogous facts in the spiritual, but are by a secret affinity in some sense actual reflections of these facts. Thus the visible becomes a symbol of the invisible, and the temporal of the eternal. This is an important fact to be grasped. It is an advance from the life of

which we actually have had experience to the life of which we have had no experience, from the known to the unknown. Of course the underlying postulate is that the laws of God, which we have learnt on this lower plane of being, prevail though in fuller measure on the higher, and that what we have found to be essentially true here cannot be false there.

Having now given the definition of the New Testament parable proper, we are enabled to deal with another problem emerging in the parable of the Divers Soils, and this is that, while the parable falls into two parts, namely, the parable itself and its explanation as given by our Lord, we find that the explanation is in no true sense a parable but an allegory. It is, therefore, incumbent on us here to discriminate the parable and the allegory. This task can be quickly despatched; for, whereas in the parable there is a comparison of relations, in the allegory, which is in reality a succession of metaphors, all taken from the same sphere and forming a connected whole, there is a comparison not of relations but of individual terms and elements. As instances of metaphors in our Lord's language, we might cite such familiar expressions as "Are ye able to drink the *cup* that I drink of" (Mark x. 38), and "Beware of the *leaven* of the Pharisees" (Mark viii. 15). Such metaphors are not infrequent, but allegory¹

¹ Allegorical interpretation reads an entirely foreign subjective meaning into the passage that has to be explained. It is the child of

is very seldom used by our Lord. We shall take one example from Luke xi. 24-26: "The unclean spirit when he is gone out of a man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest; and finding none he saith, I will turn back into my house whence I came out. And when he is come he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first." Here the necessary explanation is given, as the allegory proceeds, namely, that the house in the text is the demoniac himself from whom the unclean spirit has been driven forth: the waterless places denote the discomforts experienced by the unclean disembodied spirit: while the house swept and garnished is shown by the context to be the man who, however great his physical and mental improvement, is unsecured by the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness to resist the return of the evil spirit with seven other spirits worse than himself.

Having now distinguished between the parable proper and the allegory, both of which are attested in the parable of the Divers Soils, we now return to the discussion of the purpose of the parable. Is this purpose to reveal and teach the mysteries of the kingdom, or is it to conceal them, or, yet again, is it designed at once to reveal and to conceal? Now in

piety which seeks to preserve a sacred tradition by reading a new meaning into it.

recent years an able German scholar—Adolph Jülicher—has maintained that the Gospels undoubtedly bear testimony to a twofold purpose in parabolic teaching. The first and true purpose was that which was present in the mind of our Lord, whose object in using parables was to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom, while the second and mistaken conception of their purpose is that which the Evangelists assign to them. The Evangelists—at least the second and third—he maintains, did not understand the true purpose of the parables, but believed that our Lord told His parables as esoteric mysteries, which were designed to be unintelligible to the multitude and to be explained subsequently to the inner circle of the disciples. Jülicher supports his theory by two passages in the fourth chapter of St. Mark. The first is, “And He said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them” (iv. 11, 12). These words seem to imply that our Lord spake parables before the multitude with the deliberate object of concealing the truth, of hindering their conversion, of hardening, blinding, and stupefying them.

The next passage reads: “And without a parable spake He not unto them: but

privately to His own disciples He expounded all things" (iv. 34).

Now in the first place it is to be observed that not once or twice but frequently throughout the Gospels it is plainly stated, as Jülicher indeed maintains, that the object of our Lord's parabolic teaching was to reveal divine truth and not to conceal it, and yet it is to the writers of the Gospels, whom Jülicher accuses of misunderstanding our Lord's use of the parable, that we owe this knowledge.¹ Twice even in this fourth chapter of Mark, from which Jülicher derives the chief evidence for his theory, we find statements that conflict with his theory. Thus in iv. 2 it is said: "He taught them many things by parables." Now it is obvious that the object of teaching is to convey truth to the taught, and not to perplex and mystify them. Again in iv. 33, "With many such parables spake He the word unto them as they were able to hear it." The implication here is that Christ sought to make His teaching as easy as possible. The kingdom of God, which He came to announce and introduce, was a subject difficult to apprehend, and so He taught them just so far as they could understand, and embodied His teaching in symbolical language, which was susceptible of an ever fuller significance, varying directly in the measure of the faithfulness of the disciples—

¹ If the Evangelists misunderstood our Lord's teaching, then this misapprehension of fact should show itself mainly and pre-eminently in the narrative for which they are solely responsible and not in the transmitted sayings. Yet it is just the converse that is true. This alleged misapprehension is nowhere discoverable in the narrative.

their teachableness, openness of mind, and humility. Without such qualities the best teaching could avail naught.

Again, if the object of the parable was to darken counsel, why does our Lord avail Himself of its help within the circle of His chosen disciples, from whom He could not possibly have wished to conceal His meaning (Matt. xiii. 44 sqq., 47 sqq.; Mk. ii. 19 sqq.; Luke xvi. 1)?

In fact, a long list of passages make it inconceivable that our Lord could have wished to exclude from a knowledge of the kingdom, and therefore from salvation, the masses that flocked together so eagerly to hear Him. In Mk. vi. 34 it is said that Jesus seeing much people "had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things."

The very parable I have chosen as the subject of these sermons shows that our Lord, while fully realising the varying fitness and unfitness of His hearers for the kingdom, makes it clear that He regards none of them as absolutely unfitted to understand, and clearly implies that such unfitness, so far as it does exist, is mainly voluntary and self-chosen, and the result of the character, which the individual has created for himself.

The parables, moreover, even when unaccompanied by an interpretation, were adapted to convey instruction; for according to Matt. xxi. 45 the high priests and Pharisees, who

cannot under the most favourable hypothesis be regarded as well equipped for understanding Christ's teaching, are represented as having understood the parables that were addressed to them.

Now if our Lord's declared and often unprincipled opponents understood His parables, surely the multitudes who were not consciously hostile could also understand the parables in some degree? But at times the difficulty of the parable was due not to the unfitness of the hearer, but to the intrinsic subtilty of the subject. Accordingly we find that after the parables of the Divers Soils and the Tares, His disciples and others with them were not content with the obvious truths conveyed by these parables, but went to Him subsequently and sought further instruction regarding them (iv. 10). Hence we infer that one of the verses quoted by Jülicher, *i.e.* St. Mark iv. 34, "And without a parable spake He not unto them, but privately to His disciples He expounded all things," does not support the hypothesis advanced by him. This verse, when taken in connection with the preceding, simply implies that our Lord used parables, in order to make His teaching easy and intelligible to the masses that came to hear Him, and that, while these could hardly fail to take away with them some obvious lesson, it was open to the more earnest amongst them to come to Him and seek further instruction, and to these, we are told, our Lord "explained everything."

This passage, therefore, presents no real difficulty, but it is different with the other passage that Jülicher advances in support of his theory. This second passage occurs in the first three Gospels in the same connection, but, since it is given in its fullest and probably its most original form in St. Mark iv. 11-12, I will quote his version of it, calling attention when necessary to variations in the other two Gospels. "And He said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them." This reply of our Lord was made in answer not to the Twelve but to a larger body of eager disciples, who, according to Matthew, asked Him why He spoke to the multitude in parables. These men felt a profound interest in the parable just spoken by Christ, and so to them was accorded fuller knowledge about the parable than to those who evinced no such interest. The rest of the multitude are designated as "those that are without" (οἱ ἔξω).

This phrase goes back to a well-known Hebrew phrase (הַחֹרִיצִים), which in the mouth of a Jew meant a non-Jew, and in the mouth of a Christian, as five times in the Pauline Epistles, a non-Christian. Here, therefore, it means those who still stood without the circle of the faithful adherents of Christ.

Now this passage in Mark does seem to declare that our Lord spake in parables to this outside multitude in order to conceal the truth from them and to deepen their darkness. But if this is so, then this passage stands in open contradiction with every other passage in the Gospels bearing on this question. This at once must give us pause. Hence it is incumbent on us to examine the passage more closely.

First of all we should observe that verse 12 is a quotation from Isaiah vi. 9, 10, not translated directly from the Hebrew, but based freely on the LXX. The Hebrew may be translated as follows :

Go and tell this people :
Go on hearing—but understand not :
Go on seeing—but perceive not :
Make the heart of this people fat,
And their ears dull and close their eyes,
Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
And their heart understand and they again be healed.

In this passage Isaiah is sent to deliver God's message to an unbelieving and disobedient people. He is to preach it to them in season and out of season, and the object of the prophet's mission is not to convert them, but to produce hardness of heart and deeper blindness of spiritual vision. Unbelief in the presence of the growing revelation of God cannot but entail disastrous consequences. The heart of the people must become more obdurate, their ears duller of hearing, and their

eyes blinder. In short, the higher the revelation the more severe the judgment that necessarily follows. Now, since this spiritual declension takes place in accordance with the moral laws ordained of God, it is possible in a certain sense to say that God hardens the hearts of the disobedient and blinds their eyes, though these evil results are due to the self-will and disobedience of the people themselves.

So much for the nature of the judgment in Isaiah. Now as to its extent. The judgment, according to the present Hebrew text, was to involve the entire nation, with the exception of a small remnant (vi. 13, x. 20),¹ through whom a new and glorious epoch was to be created for the new nation.

This is unquestionably the meaning of the text as it existed at the beginning of the Christian era. Now if we attach this meaning to the words of Isaiah as quoted in the three Gospels in connection with this parable, the implication clearly is that only a small fragment of the nation would be saved, *i.e.* the immediate followers of our Lord, whereas the bulk of the nation, designated as "those who are without," would suffer annihilation. Moreover, if we hold that our Lord attaches to the words of Isaiah the meaning they bore in the Hebrew text of His time, we cannot evade the con-

¹ But x. 20 is an addition of a later date, and the reference to the "holy seed" in vi. 13 is likewise an interpolation which is wanting in the LXX, and is at variance with the context, which states that, even if a tenth of the population be left behind when Yahweh exiles the rest, this too must be exterminated.

clusion, that in this passage at all events He uses the parable with the object of concealing the truth from those that were outside His circle—"in order that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand," whereas to His immediate circle "the mystery of the kingdom" was openly set forth.

So far, then, as the nation is concerned these words represent our Lord as meeting with no better success with His contemporaries than Isaiah did with the people of his time. Nay, more, they represent the failure of His mission to Israel as an integral part of the foreordained counsel of God. The fact that this passage in Isaiah is in part freely quoted by St. Paul (Rom. xi. 8) and by the Fourth Gospel (xii. 40), with the same predestinative force, is of course in favour of interpreting the quotation in St. Mark from the same deterministic standpoint.

This passage in St. Mark is, therefore, full of difficulty. But it is not a source of difficulty to us only. It was already a source of deep perplexity to at least one of the Evangelists in the first century of the Christian era. Thus St. Matthew deliberately removes this predestinative character from the words by changing *ἵνα* into *ὅτι*: that is, instead of Mark's "in order that seeing they may not see," Matthew reads "because seeing they see not." This gives quite a different turn to the passage. It represents Christ as speaking in parables,

because the people are not able to understand the secrets of the kingdom when revealed in plain language. In the third Gospel, though the deterministic character of the passage is preserved, St. Luke omits the clause in Mark: "all things are done in parables," because he felt that all Christ's teaching was not of this nature.

But it is just possible that the conjunction *iva*, which in Classical Greek always denotes purpose and means "in order that" in such contexts as the present, has here lost that meaning and denotes simply consequence or result, as undoubtedly it did in later Greek. In fact there are, according to modern scholars, many instances of this latter use in the New Testament, *i.e.* in the Pauline Epistles (Rom. xi. 11; 1 Thess. v. 4), in Luke (i. 43), in John (ix. 2); in the First Epistle of St. John (i. 9) and in the Apocalypse (xiii. 13, xiv. 13). If *iva* has here and in Luke this meaning it could no longer be said that Christ taught in parables with the express purpose of preventing the people from understanding His teaching. Rather the words would mean that Christ's teaching was given to "those that were without" in parables, and that the result of His teaching was that they neither perceived nor understood because they were without. Thus we should translate the words: "But unto them that are without all things are done in parables, so that as a result they go on seeing and perceive not, and they go on hearing and

understand not." The passage in Luke is to be similarly rendered. This interpretation would in some degree bring the passage in Mark and Luke into line with that in Matthew.

But because certain individuals or persons are in the present among those that are without, it does not follow that they shall be so always. At any time or under whatever influence a man breaks away from this condition of spiritual insensibility, the parable, which had hitherto been nothing more to him than an earthly story, begins in the measure of his receptiveness to disclose to him the mysteries of the kingdom. Had these spiritual truths been set before the man in plain unfigured speech instead of in parables, they would hardly have left a trace behind, owing either to the man's lack of interest or lack of insight or both combined, that is, to use our Lord's diction, to his being among "those that are without." Now it is just here in the case of the parables that our Lord has disclosed the secret of all effectual teaching, of all teaching that shall leave a sting in the hearts and memories of the hearers, as according to Cicero did the eloquence of Pericles in the minds of the Athenians. Though the truth symbolised by the various parables failed wholly at the time to be apprehended, yet the earthly stories that formed their vehicle fixed themselves in their memories and remained with them, till some influence of the Spirit touched them, and they began to see the heavenly treasures that were enclosed in earthen

vessels. It is therefore with singular appropriateness that our Lord began His parables with that of the Divers Soils ; for here the seed with its husk and inner germ of life aptly characterises the nature of the parable itself as an earthen vessel with a heavenly treasure : for just as the husk of the seed guards the life of the germ it encloses till it finds a suitable soil, so the parable guards its spiritual truths till it finds in human hearts and human souls an appropriate soil in which it can take root, and bear fruit some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

XV

“Behold the sower went forth to sow : and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it.”—ST. MARK iv. 3, 4.¹

II

IN St. Luke viii. 11 we find that our Lord interprets the seed as “the word of God.” We should observe that it is not said that the seed is *a* word of God. This remark is not hypercritical ; for the due recognition of this fact shows that the seed symbolises everything that can instruct us in the will of God. God teaches man through conscience, through Scripture, through the Church, through creation. And this instruction may come to us through any human voice, whether of parent or wife or child, may rise from the grave from those we have wronged or loved : may teach us through a sermon, through a book, through a picture, through music or through song, or be brought home to our hearts through the glory of a sunset or the splendours of a midnight sky. The moral and visible world is a counterpart of the eternal and invisible. With its rulers and

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, March 13, 1914.

subjects, its parents and children, its sun and moon, its seedtime and harvest, its birth and death, it is throughout its entire compass a mighty parable and word of God.

All these words of God are divine hieroglyphics full of meaning to the children of the kingdom. But to none of us can these deliver their entire burthen and message, or tell us all they have to tell: for we all share more or less in the dulled ear and the unspiritual heart. But so far as we have ears to hear, to us the words of Coleridge are true: "Earth with its thousand voices praises God": to us if we can but receive it, each of these voices is a word of God:

Every bird that sings,
And every flower that stars the elastic sod,
And every breath the radiant summer brings
To the pure spirit is a word of God.

Luther enforces this same wide meaning of the phrase "word of God." "The words 'God spake,'" he says, "do not denote an articulate voice in air. God does not reveal grammatical vocables but essential things. Thus sun and moon, Peter and Paul, thou and I, are nothing but words of God."

How, then, has all this wealth of Revelation failed, this wealth of Revelation in the word of God, in the work of God, and in the conscience of man? The answer is given by Christ Himself in the parable of the Divers Soils.

The success of the kingdom is dependent

on the moral state of the heart of man. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." The world without is the reflection of the spirit within: if this spirit is teachable and humble, then God comes to be seen more and more in the physical and spiritual worlds, but if it is proud, self-centred, self-sufficient, and self-satisfied, if it is vain and frivolous, if it is divided in its allegiance, then the disorder within sooner or later makes the world without a riddle, a dark enigma, however bright our intelligence and advanced our culture.

In greater or lesser measure we all have in our hearts some of the above evil characteristics, and, so far as we allow them to have unchecked dominion of the spirit within us, we are rendered deaf to the message "the heavens are telling": we are hardened just in proportion as we draw nigh our Maker, and our darkness deepened as we advance into stronger light.

Only too true are the words of the American poet:

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendours lie:
Daily with souls that cringe and plot
We Sinais climb and know it not.

The words of God, then, are as infinite in number as His works, and the reason they fail to reveal God to us is that our hearts are either wholly or in part closed against them.

But let us consider more in detail the words

of our text: "Behold the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it." Here everything is clear. When the seed fell on the hard path that passed through the field or ran round its borders, it could not enter the soil, and so it was crushed by the wheel of the farmer's cart as it came along, or else was trodden under foot or carried away by the birds of the air. Now this hardness of the soil, which does not admit the seed, points to the characteristic of the first of the four divisions into which our Lord divides His hearers, and this characteristic is the hardness of their hearts—their unreceptiveness.

This unreceptiveness is due to the preoccupation of the mind with something other than spiritual ends.

1. This preoccupation of mind may arise from men's thoughts being wholly taken up with their household and business affairs. The danger of this preoccupation is so obvious that we shall not dwell on it. We shall only advert to the peculiar peril that besets this class. All men—at any rate all those who have any right to live—have some task, some work to do in this world. Now the fact that such work is necessary often leads men to devote a disproportionate measure of their thought and time to their business, till at last their spiritual life is thrust, not only into the second place, but is actually elbowed out of existence. These men,

with their hearts hardened by dwelling constantly on business or money or gain, afford no opening for the truth of God when set before them. They may attend divine worship because they are members of a church-going family, or because it suits their interest, or because church-going is a social convention with which they find it advisable to comply, but so pre-occupied are they with other things that their minds are beaten hard and rendered impervious to the thoughts of Christ's kingdom. These men have made themselves citizens wholly of this present world, and have come to cherish no thought or aspiration that leads beyond it: hence in regard to the higher and eternal world they form part of the great multitude of the self-satisfied, the self-complacent, the self-involved, the rich, whom, because they seek nothing from God, God sends empty away.

2. But this preoccupation of mind may be of a lofty character, such as literature, or science, or art, or music. But, if any of these vocations claims the highest part in man's heart, then it steadily leads to an atrophy of the religious side of man.

If we persistently turn a deaf ear to the claims of religion, these claims will at last cease to appeal to us at all. The reason is—not that these claims have in the least lost their right to our obedience, but that we have lost through disuse—at all events for the time—the religious faculty. This truth has been most vividly attested in a passage in Darwin's autobiography,

which, though often quoted, is well worth quoting again. "Up to the age of thirty or beyond it," he writes, "poetry of many kinds gave me great pleasure; and even as a school-boy I took intense delight in Shakespeare. . . . Pictures formerly gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost my taste for pictures and music. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept alive through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

Now these words coming from the foremost scientist of modern times cannot be ignored. They are a confession that, though he had won the greatest rewards that the purely intellectual life could confer, he had somehow missed the best of all. Through his intense preoccupation with science, the noblest works of literature, of art and music had become but meaningless combinations of words and colour and sound: nay, more, he feels that his moral

character has been enfeebled, and, strangest of all, he fears that the absolute devotion of his powers to things intellectual may have actually damaged the intellect itself. There can be no question that he was perfectly justified in such a fear. A partial culture can only grasp a partial truth. Accordingly what holds true of the life preoccupied with science is equally true of the life preoccupied with art, or poetry, or music, or patriotism. To such lives the word of God makes its appeal in vain. If any one of these objects, lofty undoubtedly as they are in themselves, is made the sole "be all and end all" here, then in such case the man's powers that would naturally have led him forth into the other fields of knowledge and action, intellectual and moral, and above all religious, are gradually atrophied, and often become so moribund that in this world at all events the evil condition proves incurable.

I have classed religion for the moment with patriotism, and art, and science, and song, but in reality it belongs to quite a different category. For, whereas each of the latter can make its appeal to and engross only a part of the entire man, religion makes its appeal to and cannot be satisfied with less than the whole man. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"—added unto you in the measure in which you can receive them, beginning here, and attaining ever higher fulfilment elsewhere, beginning now and reaching

forth to ever fuller realisation throughout the eternity of God.

3. Or again, the mind may be preoccupied with merely human love or human friendship. Now these two things are the best things a man can have next to the knowledge of God. And yet they too may come to be obstacles to this knowledge, so far as a man is absorbed in them and seeks no higher good; for there is no love or friendship which may not prove a snare or a curse, unless it in turn is subject to a higher and diviner law. Well sings the poet:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

And a greater than man has declared: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

4. But the preoccupation of mind may be due to none of these things, but to certain religious preconceptions, one-sided or false, which have been accepted without examination from our Church or from our parents, and which cause us to reject the living word of God when it comes to us. These preoccupations may be of an intellectual or ceremonial character. Large classes in Judaism laboured under these disqualifications in the time of our Lord, and pre-eminently amongst these the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees were mainly of the priestly caste and represented the ancient religious traditions of the race. They were not, as is popularly conceived,

mere rationalists, or free-thinkers, or agnostics. Far from it. They were, rather, the true and legitimate descendants, so far as the *letter* goes, of the Old Testament Israel, to whom God spake through Moses and the prophets. They insisted on the rights of their unbroken sacerdotal succession from the earliest days, claiming at once to be the priests, the teachers, and the judges of the nation. And in support of their claims they could adduce unquestionable proofs from almost every page of their sacred writings. But though they stood for the letter of what the ancient prophets and psalmists in Israel had taught, they did not represent its spirit. They imitated the inspired men of primitive times in everything but their inspiration : they refused to accept the findings of the higher theology of later times as to a blessed future life : they clung to the past with its half truths, its ceremonialism and legalism, which in their hands had lost the living spirit that had first given them birth.

Sadduceeism was not, therefore, a new agnosticism, but simply a belated petrified theological conservatism in Israel, a hopeless and archaic religious survival. Naturally, therefore, about the beginning of the second century B.C. the Sadducees began to lose the religious leadership of the nation, which uninterruptedly and in ever-growing measure passed over into more worthy hands. The steady declension of Sadduceeism synchronises with the rise of Pharisaism.

Pharisaism represents a fresh outpouring of divine grace and enlightenment on Judaism. The Pharisees were champions of the higher theology in Israel and first appear prominently about the beginning of the second century B.C., though as yet the name Pharisee was not applied to them. For many years their history was one of patient martyrdom, with the inevitable result that, from the close of the second century B.C. onwards, they moulded for good or ill the destinies of the nation. However corrupt this movement became in later times, it was incomparably noble in its earlier days. But, when the Pharisees triumphed over their rivals and gained the mastery of the nation, they became fashionable and lost spirituality: and, like the Sadducees before them, they imitated their inspired teachers in everything but their inspiration, and reduced the spiritual aspirations of the past and the forms in which they had found expression to a fixed system of ritual and a definite set of intellectual formulas: they laid the first and main emphasis on orthodoxy—that is, the holding of a certain body of intellectual formulas and the fulfilment of a certain ritual. They believed that they were the sole possessors of the whole truth of God: that from this truth nothing could be taken and to it nothing could be added, and that their form of orthodoxy was valid for all eternity. Hence, in due course, from being the spiritual leaders of the nation, they came to be obscurantists, mere Jewish mediaevalists,

preoccupied with their ceremonial routines and petrified beliefs, that failed to touch their inner vices of character, their covetousness, their envyings and vast uncharitableness. To such religious classes, who had substituted for a spiritual religion a shallow and outworn theology, it is needless to say our Lord appealed for the most part in vain.¹

History is ever repeating itself. Large divisions in the Christian Church of the past and of the present day have come, like the Pharisees of old, to identify a certain set of opinions and a certain form of ritual with religion itself—in other words, to lay the main and unqualified emphasis, not on communion with God as revealed by Christ, but on certain forms of worship and certain intellectual beliefs. It matters not what name we attach to these divisions in the Church. So far as they lay the *main* emphasis on the acceptance of certain intellectual formulas, they are guilty of the same fatal error as the Pharisees. Furthermore, so far as they do so, they are essentially irreligious and sectarian, and make themselves unfitted for the divine message by their theological preoccupations. Being sectarian in spirit they are of course exclusive, but religious exclusives cannot succeed in excluding others but only themselves from the Church of God.

We have now dealt with the chief pre-

¹ That there was a better side of Pharisaism than that which appears in the New Testament, see Schechter's *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 1909.

occupations by which a man is prevented from accepting the word of God. You will observe the frequent use of the word "preoccupation." This word has been used advisedly of the things that are lower than the kingdom of God. For the blessed swarm of household cares, business in its myriad forms, art, literature, philosophy, have a right to *occupy* the mind, but not to *preoccupy* it. Our Lord commands us, I repeat, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." All these occupations and spheres of human effort and aspiration have their rightful place in the kingdom of God, but each in its own place in due subordination to the Spirit of Christ within the heart, whose Spirit is never withheld from those who make its acquisition their chief and crowning desire.

XVI

"And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth ; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth : and when the sun was risen, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away."—ST. MARK iv. 5, 6.

"And these in like manner are they that are sown on the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy ; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while ; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble."—iv. 16, 17.¹

III

BEFORE we enter on the elucidation of the second class of hearers described in the parable, it is advisable to call attention to a pregnant form of expression which occurs several times in it and which is somewhat difficult to understand. The expression in question presents itself four times in the explanation of the parable. Thus with reference to the seed sown by the wayside, the interpretation says "these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown." Now these words are a compressed form of expression for : this class of persons are the counterpart of the seed sown by the wayside. But we have not

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, March 20, 1914.

apprehended the real difficulty till we recognise that, whereas *in the parable* the seed in every case is identified with the word of God, and the soil with the hearers—two quite distinct things we observe—in *the explanation* both the seed and the soil are taken together as one and identified with the different classes of hearers: the first being described as “these are they by the wayside” the second class as “these are they that are sown on the rocky places”: the third class as “others are they that are sown among thorns”: and the fourth class as “those are they that were sown upon the good ground.” Thus what were two distinct things in the parable—the seed and the soil—go to the making of one thing in the explanation, *i.e.* a certain class of hearers.

Now this incongruity between the parable and its interpretation is only apparent, and not real. It arises from a comparison of the relations obtaining in the sphere of nature with those obtaining in the spiritual sphere. The former is inadequate to symbolise fully the latter. In the natural sphere the seed is sown in the soil and from it springs the grain, the production of which was the object of the sowing, but the soil remains the soil as it was heretofore, though no doubt the poorer owing to the vigour extracted from it by the seed. But in the spiritual sphere the word of God when it reaches the hearer results in a transformation of his life for good or evil, in the measure in which it is realised or not

realised. Thus the hearer in the explanation of the parable represents both the soil and the seed together, or more accurately, the soil as affected by the seed. The man who has once heard the word of God is no longer the same person as he was before he heard it. He has been affected by it and is either the better or the worse for it. Thus we see how psychologically correct are the expressions: "these are they by the wayside," "these are they that are sown on rocky places," and the like.

One other point calls for elucidation before we proceed. Since our Lord declared that He meant by this parable to unfold the mystery of the Kingdom, we may reasonably ask, What new truth did He wish to set before His disciples by such a parable? Now the answer obviously is that He sought to make it clear to His disciples that they were not to be disappointed if the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom had only a partial success. The prevailing expectation in Palestine in the time of our Lord was that, when the Messiah came, His kingdom would at once be established, would possess a universal and world dominion and claim and receive an unquestioning obedience. Such an expectation, He would teach by the present parable, was utterly baseless. His Kingdom was not to be a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom, and being a spiritual kingdom, its acceptance would of necessity depend, not on the forcible subjugation of men from without, but on the

spiritual conquest of men from within. Its progress, therefore, must be gradual, since it was conditioned by the characters of the men to whom it made its appeal, and the nature of its success vary as widely as did the dispositions of the men to whom its message came.

Having now disposed of these difficulties, we return to our subject, which has to do with the second class of hearers, who are symbolised by the seed sown on the shallow soil under which lay a bed of rock.

Now in the multitudes that followed Christ there were all kinds of hearers, and much religious enthusiasm. But since in the case of many this religious enthusiasm consisted largely of sympathy with their fellows and romantic dreams as to the coming glories of their nation, Christ turned to them on one occasion and declared severely: "If any man cometh after Me and hateth not his father and mother and wife and children . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). His discipleship, He taught them, involved the inward surrender of everything, so that the shock of no outward trial could affect it. He sifted His followers: He required them to be not idle hearers but members of an extreme religious movement opposed to the orthodoxy of the day. Many proved equal to His requirements, while the mercenary and the worldly fell away. But those that still followed had much yet to learn—to break with prejudice, and conven-

tion and traditionalism, and to enter on a new and spiritual life. Thus a great ferment grew up on all sides around Christ, there was great travail of hearts, anxious broodings, convictions waxing and waning. Of the different classes before Him perhaps the largest was that symbolised by the hearers on the rocky ground. In the first class, which we dealt with in our last sermon, we had the unreceptive hearers, their unreceptiveness being due to various forms of preoccupation. These unreceptive hearers might otherwise be variously described as the proud, the self-wise, the self-satisfied, or the self-contained.

In the second class, on the other hand, we have the opposite type of character; for they are characterised by shallow receptiveness, over-sensitive susceptibility. While the former class was closed against impressions coming from without, this class was subject to every influence from without, and carried away by every wind of doctrine and every passing burst of enthusiasm.

It is this class, with its easily moved susceptibilities, that bulks most largely at times of religious revival.

But let us deal more in detail with the description given of this class in the parable.

The seed is said to be sown on rocky ground. Now the rocky ground here does not mean soil intermixed with stones or large boulders of rock, where indeed corn might

quite well be grown and matured, but it means a thin layer of earth resting on a bed of rock. The shallow soil symbolises superficial character. Since the soil is shallow it is, of course, easily stirred, but the pliability of the surface is associated with great hardness underneath. The history of the seed sown on the shallow soil is full of significance. First it is noted that it springs up straightway. The reason for such rapid growth is obvious in such a country as Palestine. When the winter rains are over and the sun returns with increasing heat from day to day, the moist shallow soil acts as a forcing house, and so, since the seed cannot strike root downwards, all its growing energy is driven upwards, and for a time it flourishes beyond measure. But as the summer draws on, and the sun mounts daily higher in the heavens, and its heat gathers fresh intensity, at last the corn is scorched, because it had no root save in the thin soil which overlay the rock beneath, and which itself under the sun's torrid rays soon became dry and hard as a potsherd.

Turning now from the parable to its interpretation, we observe that our Lord distinguishes the shallow hearer by three characteristics. Of these the first is that he receives the good news of the kingdom *straightway*, and the second that he receives it *with joy*.

I and 2. This class is moved by emotional

excitability and inconsiderate impulsiveness. While others hesitate to receive the word just because they are counting the cost, because they are in earnest, these receive it at once and with joy, because they have no earnestness and depth of character. Now these two characteristics must be taken together; for joy in itself is not a note peculiar to this class. Joy is characteristic of deep earnest natures as well as of shallow thoughtless ones. In fact, when joy is absent in the religious life, it is a sign not of a deeply religious nature, but of a nature which, however genuine it may be, has not as yet brought its fruit to perfection. For true, deep, full-hearted joy is the highest note of the Christian character: it is the consummation of faithful service, and yet it is unsought, unbargained for by the faithful servant: it comes as a sort of unearned spiritual increment from the Great Giver of joy: it is a token that already in some degree we have entered heaven, even whilst here on earth; for heaven is the true homeland of joy. Just in proportion to the fullness and earnestness with which we serve our Lord, whether in this world or the next, do we enter into His joy, and this joy must ultimately become not a temporary or occasional emotion, as it is often here, but a permanent characteristic, an everlasting possession of all true servants of Christ.

The joy, therefore, of this class is to be

taken in connection with the shallow impulsive nature of this class. Their joy has arisen from their ready reception of all the good things that belong to the kingdom and from their overlooking and leaving out of account all the costs and hazards that membership of the kingdom inevitably involves. In fact the good news of the kingdom has only touched their feelings and imagination, but taken no hold of their heart and reason and conscience. Thus their joy is merely the joy of a shallow, frivolous nature.

Now the same shallowness, that made them susceptible to the good tidings of the kingdom and quickly responsive to it, makes them susceptible to pain and suffering and hardship, and so they are easily overcome. They had thoughtlessly supposed that, having once entered on the religious life with joyousness of heart, they would find that life made easy for them by ever fresh uprisings of religious emotion to carry them on their way. But such they find to their disappointment is not the nature of the religious life for imperfect man. They took up that life in consequence of some strong impression which made its acceptance easy, but, when the force of this impression passed away, and they were left dependent only on the sense of duty, doubts and misgivings took form, and obstacles arose on every side, and *straightway* they fell away. They had made no preparation against the seasons of gloom and darkness, they had not reckoned

on the days of wearing struggle and of shameful defeat, they had not counted on the hours when they would experience a total dryness of spirit within,—the hours when it was their sole task to go forward without encouragement, it seemed, from God or man.

The members of this class sought and accepted the good tidings of the kingdom for the comforts it promised and not from a profound, inward dissatisfaction and a longing for a better life. Thus their religion did not consist in self-surrender to the will of God but in a deliberate reservation of self: though essentially self-seekers, they sought to have a place in the kingdom of the self-forgetful, not considering that there can be no delicate members in that body whose head was crowned with thorns.

We should not fail to remark the truthfulness of the delineation, which represents a hard heart as underlying a shallow character. It has been well observed that "it is among the children of light enjoyment and unsettled life that we must look for stony-heartedness: not in the world of business—not among the poor, crushed to the earth by privation and suffering. These harden the character but often leave the heart soft. If you wish to know what hollowness and heartlessness are you must seek for them in the world of light, elegant, superficial fashion—where frivolity has turned the heart into a rock-bed of selfishness."¹

¹ Robertson of Brighton, *Sermons*, i. 24.

3. The third feature in the character of this class is that they have no root in themselves. Religious zeal springs up in crowds and spreads rapidly from man to man. But so far as this is of the nature of other emotional epidemics—and such it is and remains in the case of the class we are dealing with—it simply acts on the man from without and leaves him destitute of inward guidance, without a fountain of truth in himself. He will probably take pleasure in religious excitement as others do in fiction or in a play: he will repeat the favourite watchword of the time, the cant phrases of the ritualist, rationalist, or Evangelical, and accept blindly the prevalent doctrine whether orthodox or heterodox. His religion is thus not his own but another man's, and so it fails of necessity in the hour of trial. In the home, in the shop, in the office, in the forum, he is not a whit the better for all his religious emotionalism and his dramatic reproduction of the various forms in which the religion of his time expresses itself.

True religion must, therefore, come from within. Outward things have, of course, great influence on all of us, but an influence that grows steadily less as we advance in the Christian life. For, just in proportion as we advance in that life, it matters not so much where we are as what we are. That a man should deteriorate from contact with his fellow-men is not necessarily a disgrace to them, though it is to him. Men are every day made worse by con-

tact with the best and noblest. It was so with Judas: it is so with all the unbelieving and impure.

There are men and women whose company can in one short hour draw out of us such floods of insincerity, worldliness, and uncharitableness, that we are all but overwhelmed by remorse and despair, having deemed ourselves incapable of such betrayals of our Lord. In such cases, if we are wise, we should attribute our fall not to others, but to ourselves; for we cannot but acknowledge, that had not the evil been in our hearts, it could not have come forth to meet the evil in others. Purity that is pure, only because it is fenced from temptation, is not purity at all: it is only the creature of favourable circumstances, and accordingly often fails when these prove adverse. The softest climes produce the poorest men. The life that is to develop Godward must be thrown on rough conditions. The greatest virtues are only realised in direct opposition to circumstance. Reliance on circumstance always leads to our excusing ourselves for sin through temptation. But temptation is not a cause of transgression. It is rather a call to heroic service, to magnanimous duty, an occasion of trust reposed on our fidelity, an opportunity on which we are called to give witness to the Christ within us. It is trial and difficulty and temptation that alone can discipline character, and make conscience great. The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount

could not be realised save through the conquest of adverse circumstance, and the mark of the faithful has been and will be unto all time: "These are those who have come through great tribulation."

Every true life has in it something of the martyr spirit—of a testimony given at a cost to the indwelling of God within us. Christian goodness has no part in actions that cost their performers no sacrifice, or in emotions that end in their own self-indulgence.

How much of our religion is cant, formalism, or superstition? All that is dependent on outward favouring circumstances. Suppose that all these were changed, that the fences wherewith we protect ourselves from aggressive evil from without were removed, that our particular form of goodness was stripped for the time of popular countenance, that not only the world, but also our own intimate circle turned against us, that no eye blessed us, and no voice was raised on our behalf, would the faith we hold be strong to sustain us, would it have the root of spiritual growth? This is no idle question. For in every man's life this trial, this season of testing, must come sooner or later, and in the case of most men, not once or twice, but from time to time in life's journey, God's summons comes and bids the faithful to advance onward and upward, and obedience to such a summons always involves some sacrifice of ease and self-indulgence, some break with things outward, some venture of

faith, some advance from the familiar and known to the unfamiliar and unknown. Only real inward religion can avail at such times, and make us strong to face the perils of a good cause, when it is frowned upon by the great and powerful, and adhere to duty when duty may entail obloquy and ostracism—yea, and to draw still nigher to our God, though He speaks to us as He did to Job out of the whirlwind, and the world visits with its censure, and friends wound the sore of heart, and no object is discernible throughout the stormy landscape save the rugged outlines of the Cross.

XVII

“And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.”—ST. MARK iv. 7. The interpretation of this passage, as given by our Lord, is to be found in iv. 18-19: “And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”¹

IV

THE third class of unprofitable hearers, who are symbolised by the seed sown among the thorns, differs widely from the two former classes. The first class, we found, embraces those who are—at all events for the time being—wholly unreceptive of the word owing to their various preoccupations, which have closed their hearts to the things of the spiritual world. These preoccupations might arise from men's thoughts being so entirely taken up with their household cares, or business concerns, that the word makes its appeal to them in vain. Their minds are beaten hard, as it were, and rendered impervious to the claims of Christ. These are the self-satisfied,

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, March 27, 1914.

the great class of those who, whether possessed of wealth or oppressed by poverty, are described with dread irony in the Gospel as the rich, who, because they seek nothing from God, receive nothing from Him, but are sent empty away. We further found that these self-disfranchised children of the kingdom embraced those whose preoccupations were of a loftier nature such as literature, or science, or music, or art, or patriotism, or human friendship, or human love. Since each of these made its appeal to only a portion of the man, complete engrossment in any one of them led of necessity to an atrophy of all his other powers, and especially of the powers that reached forth into the spiritual world—the most dangerous atrophy of all; for whereas art, or science, or song, or the like, can make its appeal to and bring into subjection only one part of the whole man, religion alone can control and discipline and uplift our entire personality in all its activities, achievements, and aspirations.

Coming now to the second class, we found that this class is in all respects diverse from the first. The members of this class are not unreceptive as those of the first: they are rather morbidly sensitive to every outward change, but their receptiveness is superficial: they are frivolous: their life is all on the surface: they have no real earnestness, no firmly rooted purpose or conviction; for the depths of their being have not been touched and quickened by the word of God. Such people

are quickly taken with every new thing and become as quickly weary of it, and when religion comes in the way of these persons it shares the same fate as everything else. Moreover, beneath their easily stirred emotional nature there lies a hard and stony heart, a very rock-bed of selfishness. It is not strange, therefore, that these persons must prove failures as far as religion is concerned; for their religion, so far as it does exist, consists not in the surrender of self to God, but in the deliberate reservation of self. Their religion, also, is mainly from without—the mere product of circumstances. Indeed such characters are as a whole the offspring of their surroundings, and destitute of self-reliance: they are the slaves of the prevailing fashion in literature, art, science, or religion, the empty echoes of the true as well as of the false teachings of the day. In short, they are, as the Germans describe it, mere children of the *zeitgeist*.

The third class, whose character we are to study this afternoon, are contra-distinguished from the first class in that they are receptive and open to the truth, and from the second class in that they are not frivolous and shallow but strong, deep, earnest natures. How is it, then, that such as these come in the end to be unprofitable hearers? Let us recur to our text: "And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit." Here no fault is found with the soil as to its deepness and goodness; but

attention is drawn to the fact that the soil is not clean. There are thorns and weeds in it, which, in their later growth, outstrip the corn and choke it, and so no fruit is brought unto perfection. Here we have symbolised a rich and vigorous nature, which hears the word with deep feeling and intelligent interest, and realises its solemn importance. But, though deep sympathy with the word is manifested, there is no steady correlative advance in the religious life: while there is at the same time a growing disproportion between spiritual knowledge and conduct: no fruit is brought unto perfection. And yet the man is not a hypocrite, but he is a man of two minds: his will is divided: he serves God to-day, he will serve mammon to-morrow: he is now very religious, he is again very worldly: he is on one occasion a preacher of the kingdom of God, on another a mere partisan in some political party. And so, as a rule, he will persist to the end, for he is a man of determination within certain limits: what he has begun he will carry through: he is prominent in good works and on religious platforms, and keeps up his profession of religion to the end; for he bringeth forth some fruit, but none to perfection: and at last, though the blade withers not—that is, the profession of religion is held fast to the end—he becomes wholly unfruitful.

But we may be tempted to ask, Who can bring forth fruit to perfection, seeing that no

character is free from the evils symbolised by the thorns? This is a pertinent question, and leads us further in the elucidation of the character we are studying. We have already recognised that the soil is good, but that does not mean that it is clear from other seeds than those we sow in it. There is no such soil. And as there is no such soil, it is just as true that there is no such thing in this world as a character wholly free from evil desire and corrupt affection. It is only a question of more or less. We can, therefore, turn aside from this undisputed fact to a matter of real moment, and this is the *attitude* the man adopts towards his vices of character original and self-incurred. Here it is that the double-mindedness of the man betrays itself. The soil is good enough, but the husbandry is bad. Strongly endowed with passions, some leading to spiritual ends, others to purely worldly or ignoble issues, he seeks to indulge both. Perhaps he shrinks even from wishing for a spiritual transformation of the latter under the idea that this would rob life of half its desirableness. Here it is that the double-minded man fails and must fail, and that the single-minded man, resolutely set on his object, can alone be assured of ultimate success. And yet, even in his case, his achievement will always fall far short of his aspiration, and the issues of his life far short of his ideals.

We have already remarked that, in the case of this third class, the husbandry is bad. And

yet the character of the soil is such that only the most careful husbandry could ultimately free the rich, deep soil from the thorns that are rooted in it. But it is just here that the husbandry fails. The thorns are left alone. They have a natural affinity with the soil, and inevitably, therefore, a stronger growth than the new elements introduced from without in the form of grain. It follows accordingly that, unless vigorous action is taken with a view to the elimination of the thorns, the thorns will ultimately outgrow and choke the grain, the land will return to its primitive savagery, there will be a reversion to type.

The lesson is obvious. It is impossible for the word of God, which has genuinely entered the heart of a man and in part transformed it, to go on with its work of spiritual transformation if the original vices of his nature are suffered to persist. At the outset it matters not how criminal or sinful the man may have been if the message of God can once gain a hearing and win a single-hearted allegiance. In such a case the man will be cleansed sooner or later from the vices that debased him, and his character will begin to manifest the virtues and the graces that belong to the kingdom of God. It may indeed happen that few, if any, such graces may manifest themselves in this life, and that the man may succeed in little more than uprooting the thorns due to an evil heritage and his own ill-spent years; and yet, such an achievement in itself may be infinitely

nobler in God's sight than that of the man who inherited a well-cultivated soil, and failed to make it more fruitful than he found it.

In any case, however frequently we fail in the attempt, we must go on with our spiritual husbandry and wage a truceless warfare against the malicious and envious thoughts, the jealousies and mean irritations, the low propensities, the suspiciousness, the covetousness, the impurity, the selfish ease or the wearing anxieties that have swayed us in the past, and, if we are single-hearted servants of Christ, we can do so with the certainty of ultimate victory over the entire field. The unreserved surrender of themselves to God makes men conscious of hitherto unthought-of powers and hitherto undreamt-of achievements. By such self-surrender they have become part of the eternal life of God, and thereby every sort of courage and endurance, every capacity for action, every noble impulse and enthusiasm, every form of intellectual energy is in due course set free from their bondage to lower things, so that they can be flung undissipated and unimpaired into the struggle for God's truth and for God's righteousness.

In our Lord's interpretation of the parable according to Mark, the thorns symbolised "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things." According to Luke the thorns point to "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life," while Matthew mentions only the first two given in St. Mark,

“the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.” We have already dwelt upon the fact that no men are free from some such disabilities, whether inherited or acquired, and that they are already labouring under these disabilities when the word of the kingdom comes to them. It is true that no attention is called to this fact in regard to the fourth class, but it is none the less true on that account ; for, in the short terse descriptions of the various soils, only the most prominent characteristics of the soil can be given. Hence, as we have already observed, it is not the presence of the corrupt or inordinate desires in this class that is the only matter of moment, but it is the *attitude*¹ which the man assumes to them when once he has been brought under the influence of the Spirit of God.

But there is one phrase in St. Mark’s reproduction of our Lord’s interpretation that can hardly be original, since it runs directly counter to the words of the parable itself. This phrase occurs in the passage : “the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things *entering in* choke the word.” Now there must be some primitive error here ; for these things cannot be said to “enter into” the man, since they were already in possession of him before he heard the word. The erroneous character of this phrase was felt by both the first and third Evangelists. The first omits it wholly, whilst the third either preserves

¹ See next Sermon, *ad init.*

the right Greek word or substitutes a different one,¹ and so keeps the interpretation in harmony with the words of the parable. But the consciousness of this difficulty in the Marcan text was felt in some quarters in the early centuries; for one of the oldest uncial MSS. (*i.e.* $\aleph$) alters the text and reads: "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word." But there is no need for such drastic revision of the text; for it is highly probable that the words "enter in and choke the word" represent a corruption of a Hebrew and Aramaic idiom, which translated literally would be, "go and choke the word," but rendered idiomatically would run, "choke the word more and more." It is strange that no attempt to explain this incongruity in Mark has, so far as I am aware, been made heretofore, and all the more strange as Ewald and other scholars suggested, and as I think rightly, that the Aramaic idiom above referred to lies behind the text in Luke, which should be translated: "And that which fell among the thorns, these are they which have heard, but owing to cares and riches and pleasures of this life are choked more and more

¹ St. Mark has *εἰσπορεύμεναι* (he never uses *πορεύεσθαι*), whereas St. Luke has *πορεύμενοι*. The latter, I have no doubt, is right. Accordingly St. Luke viii. 14, *ὅτι μεριμνῶν . . . πορεύμενοι συμπνίγονται* is to be translated: "Owing to cares . . . they are more and more choked"; for *πορεύμενοι συμπνίγονται* is a poor rendering of a well-known Hebrew and Aramaic idiom = הִלְכִּים וַיִּמְעַקֵּם. The LXX generally renders this idiom inadequately or badly. See Exod. xix. 19; 1 Sam. ii. 26; 2 Sam. iii. 1, xv. 12; Jonah, i, 11, 13; Prov. iv. 18; 2 Chron. xvii. 12; Esther ix. 4. [*εἰς*] *πορεύμεναι συμπνίγουσιν τὸν λόγον* (St. Mark iv. 19) = הִלְכִּים וַיִּמְעַקֵּם אֶת-הַדָּבָר = "choke the word more and more."

and bring no fruit to perfection." How obviously right is this as compared with the accepted rendering given in the Revised Version. Luke viii. 14: "And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

Let us now return to our Lord's interpretation. Though the evils are inherent in the man's nature, it is not in the earlier stages of the Christian life that their disastrous influence is fully experienced. The thorns grow up with the wheat. Now as the wheat does not suffer so much in the earlier stages from the thorns in its midst, so it is in the case of the class we are now dealing with. Their danger grows in intensity with the growing years, and in proportion to the growing claims of the world on their time and energies; for each development of life brings with it new cares, new distractions; for this is the more exact rendering of the Greek word (*μέριμναι*). These cares, these so-called secular matters, are, of course, not necessarily wrong in themselves. They can all rightfully claim their share of our time and energies either *in the home or in the world without*. They are concerned with the anxieties wherewith every man is beset, what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed, as well as with the nobler cares of fathers and mothers, children and friends for the various objects

claiming their help and affection. They are called "cares of this world" because, considered absolutely in themselves, they do not lead beyond the sphere of this world; and, since of necessity they must occupy the greater part of every man's life, they naturally tend to engross more and more his energies, aims, and aspirations, till at last the religious life has no room to flourish. By the side of these "cares of this world" our Lord places "the deceitfulness of riches." This phrase means the deceit practised on the mind by riches, inasmuch as, though but an earthly and perishable possession, they appear to be a most highly desirable one, as promising manifold satisfactions, as providing means for warding off anxiety, fencing life against hostility and securing it against discomfort.

It is clear that, as far as we are overcome by the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches, we are suffering the thorns to gain the mastery, we are double-minded, we are divided within ourselves, and our confidence in God is constantly yielding to the fears and anxieties, to the jealousies and the rivalries that are begotten by our pursuit of lower things. Now every such act of worldly carefulness, every time-serving compliance, is an act of disloyalty to God; and in so far as we do so act, we are declaring by our conduct that it is not wise or safe to be perfectly honest and true and pure and unselfish: that it is not prudent to trust to God's care for us, but that

it is advisable and needful to take securities and pledges against God's failing us.

On the issue of such a life it is needless to dilate. On every aspect of it the word failure must sooner or later be writ large. While such a man seeks to make the best of both worlds, he fails to enjoy the good of either. He aims at ease and security and finds only disquiet, the interminable trouble and unrest that attend on the divided heart.

So far as a man associates some desire of a purely secular nature on equal terms with what should be his chief or crowning desire, then care and anxiety must be his portion—the present price which he pays for the earthly goods, which may or may not become his. It is the inevitable penalty he must incur for want of trust in God.

Only, so far as we accept God's will as true and just and right, and follow it without compromise alike in our home and public life, can we look for and enjoy the benediction and the peace of God; for then we can have full assurance that the Lord will be mindful of His own—even of the least worthy of them:

O earth so full of dreary noises,
O men with wailing in your voices:
O cursed gold—the wailer's heap:
O strife, O curse that o'er us fall,
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved sleep.

We have now dealt with some of the chief reasons for the failure of the third class of

hearers, but we might further ask how it comes that the men of this class, who are by no means hypocrites, come to deceive themselves; for this undoubtedly they do: otherwise they would not persist in the unhappy lifelong struggle to serve two masters. The answer is in most cases not far to seek. The members of this class possess certain good habits, and their consciousness, that they have habits which are blameless and unexceptionable, assures them that they are genuine members of the kingdom. And their subjective assurance is confirmed from without; for even the world acknowledges the value of such habits, the Church bestows on them its benediction, and often in the course of history both the Church and the world have acquiesced in making Christian goodness and religion to consist in the possession of good habits, or of a religion of pure routine.

And yet a considerable portion of the class of spiritual failures is composed of people of unexceptionable habits; for after all what are habits, even faultless habits? They are, indeed, if they are still in the making, witnesses to the present working of God's Spirit within man, but if they have all been already formed they are merely signs of a life that once was spiritually alive but is now dead. Habits, moreover, are not faith, nor hope, nor love. They are essentially stationary. They are of the nature of entrenchments or forts, which, when we were spiritually alive, we built in the

country on whose conquest our minds were bent and from which we could issue forth on nobler enterprise intent. But they do not spur us onward to such enterprise: they only help us to remain where we are, and prevent us from falling back: they have no inspiring, impelling power. In fact the older they become, the more mechanical they tend to be. By means of them the Christian life, which is of necessity of the nature of a continuous onward march and conquest, is transformed into a series of religious evolutions on the same ground and within the same barrack walls. The routine may be one of our own devising or we may be one of a religious community, and the routine may be imposed from without. In either case the forms of duty, excellent no doubt in themselves, fail, just because they have become a routine, to touch the deeper faults of character, the meannesses, the jealousies, the ambitions, which under such excellent cover have gone on growing: while all the time we have gone on thinking ourselves good, because we did certain good works, used certain theological phrases, attended certain religious services, utterly unconscious of the growing and corroding sin within.

How utterly disappointing are the lives of those who have lived under an external routine when there comes a sudden change of circumstances, and some unlooked-for emergency arises, to meet and master which there is no living spirit within.

Now, in conclusion, let it not be supposed that we are here seeking to depreciate habits. In their right place habits are indispensable helps to religion, and as such they are priceless. We should have a habit of devotion, but not of resting in the same devotion, of doing good, but ever from purer motives, and with increase of power and sacrifice. "He that is a Christian is not a Christian," said Luther. Our Christian life must be progressive. It cannot therefore be an ever recurring contest with the same foes or for the same prize. If so it is, then we have been unfaithful.

For we are called daily to transcend our past, to win fresh spiritual heights: for new opportunities, new possibilities are ever opening to us: and daily—nay, hourly—in the high festival of the kingdom, Christ is summoning the humble in heart, the self-surrendered in spirit to come up higher, and if we are to remain in our Father's house we must obey this summons at whatever cost: for Christian life is an aspiration and a growth on the scale of the Eternal: "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

XVIII

"And others fell into the good ground and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold."—ST. MARK iv. 8.

"And those are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."—iv. 20.¹

V

BEFORE we enter on the study of the fourth class of hearers, we must deal briefly with a possible misunderstanding to which the parable might lead. It might seem that it taught that the four conditions of heart, in which the word finds its hearers, are permanent and unchangeable, and that, given the first three conditions in the parable, the word preached could have no effect. But there is no such immoral fatalism in the Gospels. The fourfold difference of soil in the parable represents the fourfold difference in the attitude of the hearers of the word, which, it is true, springs from the fourfold difference in the heart to which the word is preached. In short, a man's present attitude to the word

¹ Preached in Westminster Abbey, April 4, 1914.

is conditioned by his past. But in the case of the divers soils of the earth, the difference is not self-caused but involuntary, whereas in the case of mankind the inner nature of the hearer of the word has not become what it now is without his conscious self-determination or culpable moral inertia. Moreover, given a certain soil, the result of the sowing of the seed in that soil follows as a matter of physical necessity, but this is not so in the world of man. A man's attitude to the word is undoubtedly conditioned by his past life, but not irresistibly determined by it. However evil that past, the individual can in communion with God break with the iron nexus of that past and make a new beginning, different in essence from that past and incapable of explanation from it as a starting-point. On the other hand it is true that this new beginning is always conditioned in some degree by that past. Thus it comes that, though a man may be in one of the evil conditions depicted in the parable, he can, in answer to the voice of God, burst the bonds of the evil condition that enthrals him. The hard heart may, through the visitation of God, be softened, the shallow nature deepened, and the double-minded man delivered from the impossible claims of a double service, and become a single-hearted follower of the Christ.

Having disposed of this possible misunderstanding, we shall now turn to the interpretation of the fourth class of hearers in the parable.

In our preceding sermons we have compared the three classes of unprofitable hearers with each other, as each successively called for treatment. In dealing with the class of profitable hearers—the subject of our sermon this afternoon—we shall pursue the same method.

Now, if we wish to discover the essential characteristics of this fourth class, we shall obviously find that they consist in those elements of character which are lacking wholly or in part in the first three classes. Thus, whereas the first class, owing to the preoccupations of business or pleasure, of art, or science, of music, or, it may be, to theological prepossessions, are wholly unreceptive, this class is not unreceptive, but receives the word. And whereas the second class, who with their easily stirred emotional natures are morbidly responsive to every influence, and, owing to their lack of earnestness, constant to nothing long, are therefore only superficially receptive of the word, and speedily wearied of it; the fourth class is of a deep earnest nature, receptive of the word and open to strong and lasting convictions. And whereas the third class, possessing a rich and generous nature, hear the word with deep feeling, and, giving it a place in their hearts, bring forth fruit but nothing unto perfection because of their divided purpose and double mind, the fourth class is single-hearted in its surrender to the truth when brought before it.

But we must compare more closely the essential notes of the third and fourth classes. The members of the third class began well and to all appearance, alike to themselves and to others, were devoted servants of God, but through their conflicting desires of serving God and themselves they came to be unfruitful. They had some genuine faith in God and manifested this in good works and in their mastering certain evil tendencies incident to human nature, but they were never whole-hearted, and so in due time they became more and more engrossed by the cares of this world and the desire of riches. Now their object in pursuing such lower aims was undoubtedly to secure ease and safety, but their pursuit of them ended only in internal disquiet and unrest—the sure harvest of a divided heart—the inevitable penalty a man must pay for want of trust in God. For every yielding to worldly anxiety, every time-serving compliance is an act of disloyalty to God, and, in so far as men so act, they declare by their conduct that it is neither safe nor prudent to trust in God, but that it is wise and needful to take pledges and securities against God's failing them.

Thus the more we study the character of the third class the more unfailingly we discern that the fundamental *differentia* or distinction between them and the fourth class is that, whereas the members of the third class are double-minded, the members of the fourth

are single-minded and whole-hearted in their acceptance and fulfilment of the word.

Having now arrived at this essential characteristic of the fourth class, let us turn to the text of St. Mark and study it in the light of this truth. Here the profitable hearers are described as those "who hear the word and accept it." But this description of the profitable hearer is inadequate. In the first place, all the hearers, profitable and unprofitable alike, hear the word. Hence the four classes are not distinguished in this respect. Let us pass on, then, to the second characteristic of the profitable hearers in St. Mark. They are described as those "who hear the word and accept it." But the mere reception of the word does not take us far. For the thorny-ground hearers also receive the word and are impressed by it. It is, therefore, no adequate description of the profitable or perfect hearer to say of him that he "hears and accepts" the word. Let us, therefore, consult the other two Evangelists, and see if they make good what is lacking in St. Mark. In St. Matthew we read: "He that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word and understandeth it." But this description is no whit more adequate than that in St. Mark; for the members of the third class heard and understood and to a considerable degree acted on what they heard. Since, therefore, the descriptions in the first two Evangelists cannot be regarded as in any degree satisfactory definitions of the hearer of

the last class, we must fall back on the third Evangelist, who describes the fourth class as follows: "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast." In these words, as we shall presently discover, we have the distinguishing note of the profitable hearer. But it is not given in the verb "hold it fast"; for the members of the third class not only hear and receive, but also to a certain degree hold it fast; but their chief and crowning error is that they do not hold fast it only, but also the evil qualities of their nature inherited or self-incurred. The precise mark of differentiation in the profitable hearer, on the other hand, must therefore be just this, that his aim is to hold fast the word and it alone. *Single-mindedness, therefore, as we have already seen, is the note of this hearer, the primary and cardinal virtue of all the citizens of the kingdom.*

But the question must be faced: Can we find this definition in our Lord's interpretation of the seed sown on the good ground, or can we only deduce it indirectly from His interpretation of the seed sown among thorns, in that the profitable hearers must possess the one necessary thing that is lacking in the unprofitable? Is there no reference to this necessary qualification in our Lord's description of the fourth class, and are we obliged to read it into His words? Now it must be confessed that there is not the slightest reference to this indispensable characteristic in either Matthew

or Mark. This is undoubtedly strange. But there is further ground for surprise. Since, according to all three Gospels, our Lord states definitely the grounds for the failure of the three classes of unprofitable hearers, it is only to be expected that in regard to the fourth class the grounds for their being profitable hearers should without fail be given.

Now although this expectation is falsified in regard to the first two Gospels, it is not so in the case of the third Gospel. The idea of single-hearted allegiance is supplied in St. Luke, *i.e.* in the phrase "an honest and good heart." Here in St. Luke we have what we have sought for in vain in Matthew and Mark. In this phrase we find a definite and adequate description of the class of profitable hearers. Now, if we wish to understand it, we can do so, either by inferring that the honest and good heart possesses the vital characteristics which the other classes did not, or by discovering what it was that was common to the various types of character, which, coming under our Lord's influence, received His teaching and bare fruit unto eternal life. By the first method, which we have already used, we learnt that the first three classes were lacking in certain characteristics—a lack that was fatal to their proving faithful disciples of Christ. Hence these characteristics must belong to the honest and good heart: in other words, the profitable hearers must not be self-satisfied, like the first class, but be moved by a divine discontent with

self: they must not be shallow selfish worldlings like the second class, but such as can find no rest in things outward: they must not be double-minded like the third class, but be actuated by a single-minded purpose—that of finding no rest till they find rest in God.

So much for the indirect method of interpreting this phrase. Let us now turn to the second, and try to discover what the multitude of very diverse characters possessed in common that became faithful to Christ. In the third sermon we pointed out that our Lord showed no joy at the great multitudes that thronged to hear Him, as He knew how little dependence was to be placed on their easily stirred emotions and passing enthusiasms. We saw how He proceeded to winnow those that followed Him by demanding from them clear and unmistakable acts of self-sacrifice: and how those that were worthy were equal to the trial, but the self-satisfied and the shallow natures and the religious worldlings soon fell away from Him. Thus all that came within His influence went through a trying ordeal, and out of this ordeal some came forth vindicated and triumphant that were before regarded as worthless and undone, while others were unmasked that before had imposed upon the world. What, then, was the quality that all possessed in common that became true disciples? As we read the Gospels we discover a wonderful variety of types of character among the true followers of Christ: Peter, self-ignorant and

impetuous, generously moved to self-sacrifice, but often unequal in the earlier days of discipleship or apostleship to the trial when the decisive moment arrived: Thomas, doubting and distrustful of the highest truth dawning upon him, but ready to sacrifice his life for whatever truth he did know: John, loving much and vehement and often intolerant: Joseph of Arimathea, the member of the Jewish Sanhedrin: Nathaniel, pure of spirit and unselfish: Matthew and Zacchaeus, members of the hated class of the tax-gatherers: the thief on the cross, the Syrophenician woman, the woman of Samaria, and other sinful women of the city not a few. Such a body of individuals, who were in the common judgment of the world good, indifferent, or very bad, saves us from the cardinal error of identifying the fourth class with the steady and respectable members of society; for outwardly these faithful adherents of Christ represented every phase of moral character. What, then, we may well ask, did all these diverse characters possess in common? They possessed in common openness to conviction and single-heartedness, and by virtue of these they showed themselves superior to convention, and custom and fashion, whether religious or secular: they did not seek to justify themselves, whatever their past life may have been: when the light appeared they did not refuse to be drawn into its accusing illumination, even though they were too well assured that their sins would therein stand

out self-condemned. Yes, the man who, when goodness is set impressively before him, instinctively starts forward and takes its side, and gives himself up to it single-heartedly, that man, no matter how stained with sin his previous life may have been, has the honest and good heart. Teachableness, openness to conviction, single-mindedness—all these are characteristics of the honest and good heart. It was for the lack of these that our Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees, when He declared that the publicans and sinners went into the kingdom of heaven before them. This of course did not mean that the scribes and Pharisees were criminally immoral like the tax-gatherers and the harlots, but that, like the scribes and Pharisees of all ages, they were the victims of manifold prepossessions, whether theological, philosophical, or scientific: when the light appeared they retired further back into their own darkness: they were less open to conviction, less single-hearted and honest as the slaves of traditionalism always are, they were less ready to acknowledge their sin, and sought rather to excuse or justify themselves.

This faithfulness to truth, this instinctive reverence of goodness amid perhaps a sinful life, is really the foundation of the honest and good heart, which finds its realisation in Christian Faith, sometimes in the midst of deep distress, sometimes in the hour of perfect calm, in the full current of life's work, or on the

death-bed—at any time when man's soul is ready, and surrenders itself in all its helplessness and single-heartedness to God.

But the profitable hearers need something more than openness to conviction and singleness of heart. The word, when once accepted, must be held fast. In fact St. Luke uses this very phrase “hold fast” (*κατέχουσιν*). In his text the profitable hearers are described as those who “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast.” Since the kingdom makes such transcendent claims on its subjects, it is manifest that faithfulness to these claims can only be maintained at a great cost. And since further its subjects are drawn from all classes of men, even from those who are regarded as the lapsed and hopeless—the apparently waste products of humanity—it follows that the cost of loyalty must often be one so exceeding great that only to God and the repentant soul can it ever be appreciated and known. But, however great may have been our moral achievements before the summons of Christ reaches us, loyalty to Him must always involve continuous effort: faithfulness, when the way is difficult and the ascent steep, when things are dark, and the sun is blotted out of the heaven, and even the light of the Spirit itself seems extinguished within us. Yet even then the man of an honest and good heart will hold fast his allegiance to his divine Master and follow whithersoever He leads, stumbling to a surety as he presses onward, falling, it may

be, not unfrequently, a disappointment at times to others, and often assuredly a heartbreak to himself, yet ever again rising in the strength of Christ, and treading firmly where before he had faltered or fallen, and thus going onward and upward, without haste, without rest, till at last he enters the gates of the promised city of God.

Into the land of righteousness I go,
The footsteps thither Thine and not mine own;
Jesu, Thyself the way, alone I know;
Thy will be mine, for other have I none:
Unprofitable servant though I be,
Gladly or sadly I will follow Thee.

THE END

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